Kristine Brennnan, Keith Paul, Rick Leonardi

ARENA

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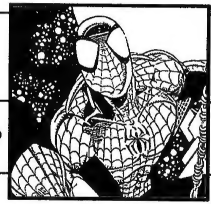

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Editorial

Something got under my skin at the last convention.

I'm not talking about physically, of course, but mentally, emotionally, spiritually, whatever. This isn't even about comics but I think you should stay and read this anyway. This is about how some kids are crazy, and on a grand scale, how nutty the world is sometimes.

I was sitting at the table and I noticed this one kid, about fifteen years old, is grabbing this other smaller kid and jerking him around by the neck. I noticed the older kid's confidence in his own physical superiority in comparison. I may not have thought twice about it, assuming that they were maybe brothers, except for the fact that the artist next to me was watching, too, and he was visibly irritated. The older kid left and it was revealed that these two didn't know each other at all. The young one was the irritated artist's girlfriend's son. What the --?

Hours later, I'm at another table, doing a sketch for a fan (yes, I draw, too). The same older kid comes up and starts teasing and jerking around on another young kid. I had flashbacks to the days of Todd Feck and Tommy Raider, the neighborhood bullies. They'd mess with everybody, because they were bigger.

And now, like then, I had to say something. Only this time, I wasn't about to get my butt kicked.

"Hey, buddy, do you guys know each other?"

"No."

"Why do you have to go around jerking on little kids?"

"Because I can," was the smug reply.

I stood up. The older kid was pretty small and I was confident in my own physical superiority in comparison. "Maybe I should jerk around on you for a little while."

He paused, then gave a little stupid laugh. "Maybe I'll get my dad."

"Oh, yeah? Who's he?"

"Over there," he pointed.

It was a dealer, a sports card retailer. He was smaller than me. I wasn't frightened.

A life drama was playing itself out right here in a comic book convention. This wasn't just one kid picking on another, younger kid. It was bully kids everywhere. It was people. It was nations. It was a struggle for innocence, against oppression, for the powerless, against the persecutor. And I did exactly what the United States tends to do in these situations... "Don't let me see you doing it around me anymore."

Okay, maybe that's pretty stupid, but here's a warning to all you bullies out there, and this is the point that I'm trying to get at... Next Time You Won't Be So Lucky.

Maybe the United States should take some advice.

Have fun. See ya',

Joe

Thrown To The Lions!

CORRESPONDENCE & ADVICE

Dear Arena:

I thought I'd write to tell you how much I enjoyed issue #10. The cover was the first thing that grabbed my attention, it was a beautiful full colored painting by Mr. Dave Dorman. The Dave Dorman/Steve Bissette interview conducted by Lurene Haines was very in-depth and I enjoyed that it focused on every aspect of the graphic novel (*Aliens: Tribe*) from start to finish.

The Todd McFarlane interview was an interesting piece. Todd's a talented guy and I enjoyed hearing about the Peter David issue, even though he didn't say anything about what Peter David's been writing about Image in his "But I Digress" column in another fan publication.

The preview of Jim Shooter's career so far was interesting and Defiant sounds like they plan to be a major force in comics. It's nice to have a rundown of the people involved in Defiant and the premises behind the Defiant Universe. Lurene Haines has to be commended for her excellent work on "Getting into the Business of Comics" section which is very informative, well written, and gets strictly to the point of each issue she covers.

The column about "If I Were Editor" was right on the money about the X-books. I have waited a long time to hear someone tell it like it is about the X-books. Jerry Smith hit the nail on the head on every point, especially on *X-Factor* -- Why did Marvel get rid of Peter David on *X-Factor*? Jerry Smith's column was excellent. I hope he does another column, maybe with the topic being the *Spider-Man* titles. Keep up the excellent work.

Peter Fisico
Richmond Hill, Ontario,
Canada

Excellent. Thanks, Peter. Everything you said was a compliment rather than criticism -- talk about inflated egos, Jerry's head is the size of a watermelon... and, taken realistically, that's pretty grotesque looking. He looks like one of the badguys from Dick Tracy.

Dear "Thrown to the Lions,"

Good idea with the implementing of contests, even though *Wizard* does it. It always serves to motivate your readers I think when they know they can get some sort of freebie when they buy your mag. And, like I said, even though *Wizard* does it, it's still a good idea and I hope you keep it up.

It seems like the debut of *Hero Illustrated* is nothing new, either. What with all the claims about not being a *Wizard* and kicking their butt, it's just a *Wizard* rip-off mag. I remain unimpressed. I realize now that I've mentioned the *W*-word four times yet this is a letter to *Arena*. The reason being is that I only have so much money in my pocket and I put aside enough for my one color magazine (you can guess what that is) and my one black and white (you can guess what that is, too). I'm thankful for *Arena*. *Wizard*'s nice and pretty and glossy and stuff but *Arena* is the best fan mag on the market hands down. Even when put up against *Wizard*. Do you guys have plans of going color? I bet if you did that you could become the new number one easily. I know it takes a lot of money but it's something you guys should think about if you have the means. It seems that color sells, especially to the younger generation. I'm 42 years old and black and white doesn't bother me but I think a lot of your 16-year olds aren't buying simply because *Arena* has no color. It's sad but true. They don't know what they're missing.

Anyway, enough of my rambling. I was rather bored and since I haven't written to you guys before to let you know how much I appreciate the contribution Arena makes to the industry, I thought I'd do it now. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Mark Tremaine
St. Louis, MO

Your welcome, Mark. At the moment, we don't have the "means" of going color but it is a much talked about issue around the office. Perhaps later on down the road this can become a definite. I think you're right about the younger readers shirking us simply because we're not color. Thanks for your insight, man.

Dear *Arena*,

I really enjoy your magazine. The "Getting Into The Business" column by Lurene Haines is very good. I also like the way Jerry Smith writes even though I don't always agree with what he says. I'm glad that Todd McFarlane did an interview with you guys. I noticed that Paul Birch did the interview. Isn't he your Brit Bits guy? Did he interview Todd in England?

Other interviews I'd like to see

are Frank Miller, Jim Lee, Erik Larsen, Art Adams, Mike Mignola and P. Craig Russell. I see you're going to interview Rob Liefeld. That should be cool. I wonder why he's leaving Extreme. Maybe you guys can tell us.

Thanks.

Jon Florence (same name as your city)
Salem, OR

Okay, Jon, here's an update. You already know by now that the Liefeld interview just didn't happen. I hope you were satisfied with the Marc Silvestri feature. According to Tony Lobito, publisher of Image Comics, Rob left because he was too stressed out and couldn't get any work done. He will continue to do his work through Extreme but he'll be in his own studio by himself. Upcoming interviews just for you include Erik Larsen in ***AM*** *#15 and Frank Miller in* ***AM*** *#16. How's that for service? Oh, and the McFarlane interview was done in England, I believe, at the UKCAC.*

Dear Guys,

I've been reading your stuff since issue one and after a while I thought that I should put the names with the faces. I went to the Atlanta Dragon-Con a few weeks back and met you guys. I don't know if you will remember me, the guy with the outfit totally dedicated to Todd McFarlane, but I talked with all of your staff present: I have to say that you guys were the best. I mean most publishers and associated dudes would tell a fan to buzz off after a while but, to your credit, you guys talked to me and every other fan that sauntered by. I've still got the picture that Joe Martin, Dwayne Haddix, and Tony Parsons got with me. I don't want to sound like some giddy fan-boy but I just couldn't help being impressed with your staff and your products. Tell Bob thanks for all the signed stuff he gave to me and being just one cool guy. I've just got one more thing; How do you guys attract so many chicks to your booth? If you have a handbook about it, please send me a copy.

Thanks all so much,

Jeremy Allisters
Corry, PA

Chicks get attracted, Jeremy, by our very own charismatic Tony Parsons. Although the guy's name may not always be listed in ***Arena****'s credits, rest assured that he's always there behind the scenes, plugging away and providing much needed humor in the midst of one of Bob's stress breakdowns. By the way, how could we forget you? That outfit would have made Spawn sit up and take notice. See ya', man.*

Dear "Thrown To The Lions,"

I've written to your editor, Joe Martin, before, concerning the quality of your magazine and I have to say, "Bravo, Gentlemen!" Your *Arena Magazine* has not faltered in its quest to improve with every issue. The trade of Rob Liefeld to Marc Silvestri was an excellent move. I find that the magazine flows excellently and the stories are of superior workmanship. I and the members of our fan club, Z.W.A. (Zombie With Attitude), salute you for giving the comic industry a fanzine that deals with the market and the people of that market. I look foward to many more issues of *Arena*. One last question... I have heard that you sometimes use guest writers, is this true? If so, could you send me some information about it. I am extremely interested.

Good-day,

Douglas Walker
President of the Z.W.A.
Elsmere, KY

Thanks, Douglas, we appreciate your comments. To write for us, simply make a submission either of an article that you would like to see published or samples of articles or interviews that you may have done in the past. We'll check it out and, if we like it, we'll be in touch.

Dear "Thrown To The Lions,"

Geez! For a monthly release, you guys sure got a sporadic schedule. I never know what week to expect your magazine to come out. Back in *Arena #8* I think it was Joe Martin who said that you guys were going to be on time from now on... WELL? You're not.

That's about my only beef with you, though. Otherwise, pretty damn good! Great interviews, even though the Dorman/ Bissette thing was way too long and boring. I didn't even finish it. Still, John Byrne was cool and I can't say I'm looking forward to the Liefeld interview but I'll read it anyways. What the hell. Jerry Smith's column, Comics Now, is pretty good. Me and him must have the same tastes because I don't think I've disgreed once. Well, he said *Cyber Force* was bad and I liked it, so that's once, I guess.

Anyways, I'm gonna go now but you guys should think about being on time more. Certainly don't say you're gonna be out and

then not do it. That's bad and it can piss some people off, y'know.

Thanks, guys,

Lou Ryerson
Bridgeport, CT

P.S. Don't worry about the jerk, Scott Kincaid. I like you guys a lot better than *Amazing Heroes*. Man, when he said that, he was just sounding off.

Thanks, Lou. Kincaid means well and that's what counts. As for the "on time" stuff, well, we're off schedule every now and then but if you look at ***Comics Arena*** *#1, it had a July '92 release date on it, and* ***Arena Magazine*** *#12 came out in August of '93, so we're only a month behind. We'll catch up. Count on it.*

Dear *Arena Magazine*,

It's good to see that you guys are still improving with every issue. I rather enjoyed the John Byrne interview in *Arena* #11 and although I don't harbor hopes for Malibu's Ultraverse (I haven't read one thing I liked), I thought that James Hudnall and Chris Wozniak both had intriguing interviews.

My point in writing however is to address the fact of why there are so many fan magazines out there and which ones you should be reading.

The industry has grown to great proportions. In Joe Martin's editorial in *AM* #11, he stated this all too well. He said something like, "Soon there will be more publishers than readers." Well put. But, at this current growth rate, the industry almost needs a number of magazines just to cover it all. What I like about *Arena* is the fact thatyou still give small press a chance.

This leads me into what magazines I suggest:

1.) *Arena Magazine* (of course)

2.) *Comics Values Monthly* (most accurate prices other than *Overstreet's*)

3.) *Hero Illustrated* (some people think it's a rehash of *Wizard* but I actually enjoy it).

...Well, that wraps it up for now. Keep up the good work.

Brian Hendricks
Long Beach, CA

We're your number one pick, Brian? Good choice. Sorry about the bit of editing. You had many more good points but we're running out of room!

NEXT! **Jim Shooter is going to chat with us about Defiant, what he thinks about the success of Warriors of Plasm, the Marvel lawsuit and his future plans! Also, we'll speak with David Quinn about the new Doc Strange and Stan Woch about the new Majestic! Be there, or we'll cry...**

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TOM LYLE

by Joe Martin

Joe Martin: *What was your first job as a comic book artist?*

Tom Lyle: My first job? God, I shouldn't even mention that one. My first color *published* job was for Americomics and it was called *Starmasters* #1.

JM: *Yeah, I guess I should've said published job.*

TL: Well, there was this five-page thing I also did for Bill Black that was called *Bizarre Thrills* #1. It was a "Tara of the Jungle" story that I would prefer to forget.

JM: *Then we won't mention it. [chuckles deviously].*

TL: You can mention it, if you want. The *Starmasters* thing was interesting because Paul Ryan was in that, also, and now he's drawing the *Fantastic Four.*

JM: *Right. But that led to other things for you, I'm sure.*

TL: Actually, it sort of just sat

there. It was mostly my fault. At the time I wasn't devoting enough effort to be as good at drawing as I should have. Finally, I sort of buckled down and got serious.

JM: *And that led to you doing some work for Eclipse Comics?*

TL: Well, first it led to Amazing Comics and Wondercolor Comics and then that stuff led to Eclipse. I did *Rambot* and *Power Factor* for Wondercolor Comics, that was David Campiti's company at the time. Of course, he went on to Innovation and who knows where he is now.

JM: *Last I heard, he works for a place called Glass House Graphics.*

TL: Really?

JM: *Yeah, but, uh, I saw an Airboy piece you did for Eclipse that I seem to remember.*

TL: Hmm... Airboy? The only Airboy thing I got to do for them was the "Airfighters meet Sgt. Strike" and I got to draw the 1940s Airboy and that was kind of fun.

JM: *And then?*

TL: Then I went to *Starman* for DC and then *Robin*. Then I got sidetracked on the *Comet* for DC's Impact for a few issues [chuckles].

JM: *How do you feel about **Robin** getting his own book?*

TL: Frankly, it's about time [laughs]! I campaigned for a regular book after the first miniseries but Denny O'Neil and Chuck Dixon both didn't think that Robin could do it alone. But for some reason I felt that Robin could support his own book. That's not to say they were wrong at the time but just that I felt more stronger about it.

JM: *Robin sort of became your first pet project comic.*

TL: Yeah. I don't think DC expected it to do as well as it did. I hope Chuck and I can take some credit for that. DC certainly didn't want Robin to fail but they just didn't have any idea that it was going to be the hit that it was.

JM: *And he's still going strong – getting his own series – do you know much about that?*

TL: Well, at this moment Robin and I have parted ways for what appears to be... a pretty permanent thing. They did offer me the series originally but I had already taken on other projects to where I just couldn't possibly do it. I had to turn it down.

JM: *Sadly.*

TL: Well, Spider-Man beckoned and he seemed to be the move of the moment. I sort of felt like I had gone as far as I could at DC with what I was doing and I needed to do some other stuff – to "put more fire under my career" to launch it even further, as it may be [chuckles].

JM: *Spidey's your current project?*

TL: Yeah. As a matter of fact, at the end of this week, I'm going to initiate pencilling the first issue of my regular run on *Spider-Man*.

JM: *Cool. Excitement. Any thoughts here?*

TL: Um, Howard Mackie will be the writer on it and Scott Hanna, who inked my stuff on quite a few things at DC and also inked the three issues I did of "Maximum Carnage," will be the inker. Howard and I are really in sync with what we want to do on the book in terms of similar desires and interests. We don't have anything like the "grim and gritty" Spider-Man in mind but we do want to pull off some stuff that was done early on with Spider-Man as far as he was eerie and spooky and kind of intimidating. You know, he'd shine spotlight down on people and they'd kind of cringe.

JM: *Yeah, I remember that!*

TL: We're going to try and emphasize the spooky side of Spider-Man.

JM: *Very good. Right now, Spider-Man seems to have gone overboard with the "friendly neighborhood" attitude.*

TL: Yeah. I think he's gotten too friendly, too. And we'd like to delve into some side characters that aren't even in the book to sort of establish our own little niche. We're going to create some new friends for Peter since he's supposed to allegedly still be a lab assistant at Empire State University and that hasn't been covered in years.

JM: *These wonky heroes! The majority have jobs but they don't ever seem to be at them.*

TL: Yeah!

JM: *Well, if I was the Velcro-Avenger, I'd have been fired by now.*

TL: Sure [laughs]!

JM: *So you did some "Maximum Carnage" and some **Venom**...*

TL: The second miniseries called "Funeral Pyre," I did all three issues of that.

JM: *Was that fun?*

TL: That was fun. Venom is actually more difficult to draw than Spidey for some reason. I guess the shading on the black costume can get difficult at times. All in all, it was great. I got to draw Spider-Man and Venom and I got to work with Carl Potts which is something I always wanted to do.

JM: *How was it working with Carl Potts?*

TL: Very nice. Carl and I had an excellent rapport, I think, and working together we formed a good relationship. We're not like "beer-drinking buddies" but I like Carl a lot. It was enjoyable working with him.

JM: *Well, from your humble*

Tomlyle '95

beginnings you've now had the chance to work on a variety of characters. Who's your favorite?

TL: You know, of all the characters I've worked on, and I know this is going to sound diplomatic, but the character that I'm working on now is my favorite. Spider-Man is the "hot bee under my bonnet."

JM: *Hmmm... Tom Lyle in a bonnet.*

TL: [Laughs] Yeah, well. The weird thing about working on *Spider-Man* is that I've had to play catch up because I honestly haven't been following him since John Romita, Jr. was doing the book. I sort of picked up a Todd (McFarlane) issue here and there to see what the furor was about but all in all I haven't followed it religiously. Now, it's like, "Hey, this guy's more fun than I remembered!"

JM: *The cool thing about McFarlane's issues is that he was doing the new and improved "Spider-Contortionist-Man!" I think that's something the fans really liked.*

TL: I'm trying to get some of that "rubber-bandy" stuff in there, too.

JM: *And the "spaghetti-webbing?"*

TL: Oh, yeah, the "spaghetti-webbing" is fun! I hope that I can leave as much as an imprint on the title as Todd did. I hope I can figure out something as I get more comfortable with Spidey and somehow make my mark but for now I'm sort of sticking close to the "official" look. I am going to try and play with shading and stuff a bit more than the other guys did -- especially in the red areas on Spider-Man's costume. It's like when I was drawing Robin I did little things to him to make him more mine.

JM: *Like the hair?*

TL: Yeah, the hair sort of got longer and spikier and a little bit of this and that. I played with his mask a little in the last miniseries until the DC guys told me to stop doing it [laughs]! It's on the poster what I was doing and for some reason they let it get by on the poster. I just put little points on the top part of his mask and...

JM: *And nobody noticed.*

TL: Well, not for an issue and then they said, "Quit doing it." It was a pretty minor point but it was something that I felt was mine. It's kind of frustrating, I guess, watching someone else draw him because I felt like he was mine, sort of. Tom (*New Titans, Adventures of Superman*) Grummet, though, looks to be doing a fine job.

JM: *I've always liked Grummet's work. He's very good. I remember back when he was doing* ***Shadowalker*** *for Aircel, I believe, and he did* ***Privateers*** *for some other company that I don't recall.*

TL: Your memory is better than mine.

JM: *Well, thanks. Anyway, though, is there any cool characters that you'd like to work on?*

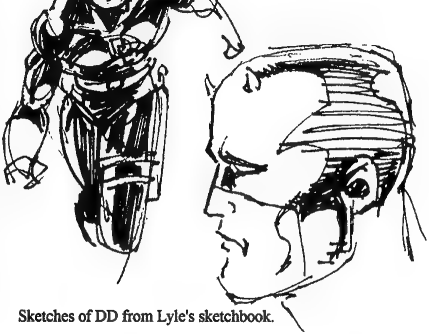
TL: Oh, I love that question. It's actually a pretty short list, however. One of my long range goals is that within a year and a half I'd like to be writing and drawing my own stuff. I'm not going to try and get Howard fired from *Spider-Man* or anything but I've gotta find something for me to do. If he decided to leave of his own accord [laughs]... just kidding. No, no, Howard, don't take it that way! I'd like to write and draw my own material and my dream project is *Daredevil*. I'd have to get rid of the armor they're doing [laughs]!

JM: *The spiky stuff that they're doing?*

TL: Yeah, I just don't think that Daredevil or Spider-Man -- either of those two guys -- should be wearing armor. That's a total antithesis to what they're character is all about.

JM: *They're suppose to be sleek, evasive maneuvering type guys punching at weak points and such.*

TL: Okay, it's like this guy who uses this radar sense to see is



Sketches of DD from Lyle's sketchbook.

gonna put something on himself that, in effect, inhibits his ability to see? I mean, come on! That sounds sort of self-defeating to me. I wish no real ill will to those guys but I hope I get a chance to write the real Daredevil someday.

JM: *The real Daredevil, in quotes.*

TL: Yeah, he's such a pure character. He's as pure as, say, Batman or Superman. He's such a simple concept of being "blind justice." Also, he's a crimefighter, which they seem to have forgotten. Lately, he's been fighting more mystical things it seems.

JM: *Like Mephisto?*

TL: Yeah, and a whole bunch of other guys. I can't help but pick the book up though, just to stay current with it.

JM: *In my opinion,* ***Daredevil*** *has nowhere near approached the days of Frank Miller, and especially the Miller/Mazzuchelli days. That stuff was the best.*

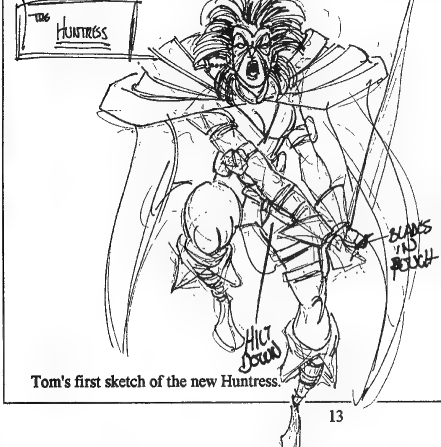
TL: Without a doubt. The "Born Again" storyline that Frank and David Mazzuchelli -- Frank Miller, jeez, I should say Frank Miller, I just met him for the first time two weeks ago so it's not like we're pals -- but that stuff is like the "bible of *Daredevil*." It's the greatest interpretation of the character.

JM: *Yeah.*

TL: It was a great representation of storytelling because those guys did it so succinctly. It's so solid, yet speedily done. Some people don't like the ending with that character, Nuke, coming in but it was a good counterpart to the Captain America character and he was a great antagonist for Daredevil to play against.

JM: *I like the aura that Miller played up with such characters as Captain America and Thor -- the one shot of Thor on top of the building calling down the storm and that was all you saw of him. That was great. It was like, "Yes! This guy's a god!" You know what I mean?*

TL: Yeah, exactly. But, uh, right now if I couldn't write and draw *Spider-Man, Daredevil* would be my dream book. From what I've seen though it's not selling that hot so it would be like coming down somewhat but still...



Tom's first sketch of the new Huntress.

JM: *Well, yeah, but then you have the chance to make it hot and that's what can really give you a sense of accomplishment.*

TL: Definitely.

JM: *Like you did with* ***Robin****.*

TL: I do feel a very good "sense of accomplishment" with *Robin* and what Chuck and I accomplished with that book. We did make him popular.

JM: *You did.*

TL: Despite the cover enhancements that DC did [laughs].

JM: *So, any other characters or are we going to leave it at Daredevil?*

TL: Captain America is cool.

JM: *Ah, another floundering book at the moment [chuckles].*

TL: When I look over the Marvel characters and I see some of the guys that I collected back in the mid '60s when Marvel was just getting their foot in the door, I saw guys like Thor and Daredevil and Captain America and I was like, "Who are these guys?" Y'know, I like Iron Man, too.

JM: *Iron Man?*

TL: I sort of like what they're doing with him. He's such an interesting character that it's hard not to play around with him.

JM: *Well, I think they should wrap up this Tony Stark thing. It's just dragging and dragging...*

TL: Well, yes, but all the storylines with him seem to go on for quite a long time [laughs].

JM: *Like the alcoholic escapade and the death storyline and, oh, well...*

TL: Yeah. I seem to be concentrating on Marvel characters but I feel like Batman and/ or Robin are characters that I'd love to write and draw something with, too, but who knows what will happen along those lines. That is left up to Denny O'Neil [laughs].

JM: *You grew up with the '60s characters so who had the big-*

gest effect on you then as far as comic books go?

TL: I didn't discover Marvel until around '66. I don't know what sort of light went off in my head but up until then I was a big Batman fan. I doodled around at drawing Batman jokingly. The first Marvel book I got I think was a *Daredevil #27*. I started buying Marvel here and there after that but they weren't very well distributed in Jacksonville, Florida, where I grew up. I had to go all over the place to find them and back then you could buy everything Marvel put out. There were only like eight books, I think.

JM: *[Laughs] Hard to believe.*

TL: Yeah! They've grown a little since then.

JM: *A little.*

TL: Yeah, and the books were only 12 cents.

JM: *I can't imagine that. This industry has really changed in thirty years.*

TL: I could get Marvel's entire line for a dollar. It was 96 cents plus 4 cents tax [chuckles].

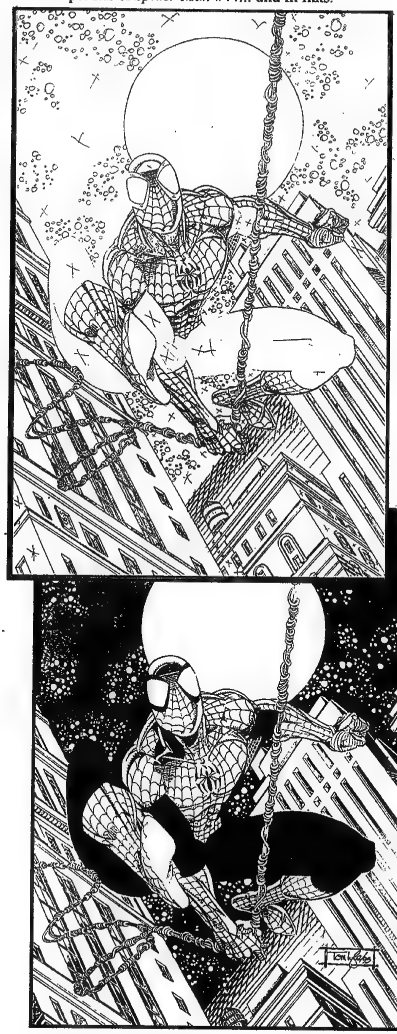
JM: *You can't even get one book for that now.*

TL: Nope. The neatest thing about me finding Marvel Comics back then, I mean DC was great, but Marvel had Jack Kirby. I went gonzo for that guy! Also, Ditko had already left *Spider-Man* and *Dr. Strange* but I managed to scrounge a whole bunch of those up because you could go to used book stores and buy second-hand comics for a dime and a nickel.

JM: *It was also at that time I think that Jack Kirby came in and introduced a whole new element to comic book art.*

TL: He was almost at the height of his career which I find very encouraging because when I figured it out he was like in his '40s then. A lot of people now think

Cover in pencils of *Spider-Man* #44... and in inks.



you're over-the-hill as far as comics go when you're 28 years old but I didn't break into comics until I was 32. Luckily, I have a young face because when they found out how old I was they automatically assumed that I wouldn't get any better.

JM: *That's stupid. Well, you proved them wrong.*

TL: I hope I did.

JM: *Jack Kirby brought dynamics to comic book art, I think.*

TL: Right. There were some artists at that time that had a certain amount of dynamism in their work but no one came close to Kirby. If you look at comics now, you have to admit that the quality of comics art is actually better. It's just that people are sometimes so caught up in the drawing that they forget the energy. For all his faults that he has, Todd McFarlane does draw rather goofily at times but the dynamism is so overwhelming that you can't help but appreciate what he's doing. In that respect, I think I can draw rings around him as far as anatomy and drawing sense but in terms of dynamism and design sense he's got me beat. Everybody has their strengths. McFarlane has so much confidence and enthusiasm about what he's doing and he somehow manages to convey it to the page. I keep trying to do that myself.

JM: *Where do you see yourself in ten years career-wise?*

TL: I'd like to draw comics and write them until I drop dead with a pencil in my hand. One of the things I tell people is that if I keep doing this but I'm not getting any better then I hope I have the sense to find something else to do. One of my enjoyments is to constantly be getting better at what I'm doing.

JM: *I'm picturing a skeleton at a drawing board with a pencil in his hand and with long curly hair.*

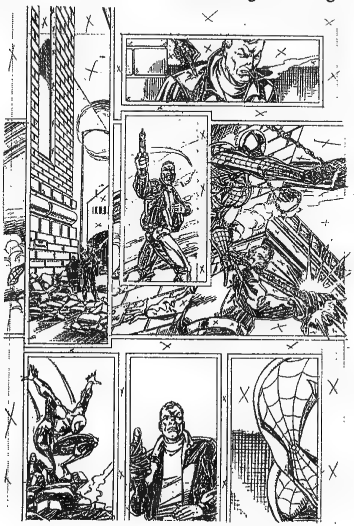
TL: [Laughs] Well, I really enjoy comics and there's days when it's work but there are days when it's a real joy. It's a great job. I would like to be doing this pretty much for the rest of my career, if I could.

JM: *Good luck to you there. So, would you work for Image?*

TL: I did a Portland show where I did some talking with Todd McFarlane off and on, partly casually, partly professionally although nothing had ever been offered or asked for. While I was out there he pretty much told me that because of the "Image Implosion" he wasn't offering anything at the time but that he was actually interested in my work. So, I can safely say that somewhere down the line I would like as much creative control with a character of my own as those guys have. I hate to admit it but I'm a greedy bastard and I like to be totally in control [chuckles]. I'm not a zealot for creator-owned stuff in the sense that I do work for the "work-for-hire" market but I do feel strongly that the creators need to not be blind lemmings going into this and realize what they're getting into. Right now, while working for the "work-for-hire" system, I'm doing my best to campaign for changes within it. Partly by just bringing things to their attention and saying, "I really don't like what you guys are doing here," and partly by talking to guys like McFarlane.

JM: *Are you much of a comic reader?*

TL: Very few, frankly. The more I get into my career, the more I cut back on the books I read. I was really into the Larry Hama/ Marc Silvestri *Wolverine*. Larry and Marc were a great team together in



my opinion. I really enjoy Larry's writing.

***JM:** And Silvestri's not too shabby himself.*

TL: In my humble opinion, in terms of drawing ability, Marc is the most talented of the Image bunch. It frustrates me slightly because he's changed his style a bit from what I admired so much. He's drawing more like the other guys and I actually liked some of the things he was doing.

***JM:** His earlier work?*

TL: Yeah. And I think his storytelling is stronger than those other guys. He does what I try hard at doing is telling a story and still having some nifty-looking panels. You've got to have something to grab the reader's eyeballs and yank in their face.

***JM:** Was Wolverine your favorite, or was it your favorite then and what's your favorite now?*

TL: I go back and forth so much... I really enjoy Mark Schultz's *Xenozoic Tales*. I think that guy is a terrific storyteller and a great artist.

***JM:** His stuff looks like Frank Frazetta's sometimes, I think.*

TL: Yeah. He's actually gone from looking like a Frazetta-clone to looking like his own artist.

***JM:** I haven't seen much of the recent stuff.*

TL: Geez, he's very talented. He doesn't believe he's as talented as he is [chuckles]. Um, on mainstream books... the Superman stuff that's going on right now is quite enjoyable but you have to read all four to follow it and that entails making it there every week which can be difficult for me. Out of friendship and religion I read Chuck Dixon's *Detective* stuff because I think he does excellent Batman work.

***JM:** The "Knightfall" storyline is doing really well. I'm reading it and enjoying it.*

TL: The frustrating thing about the "Knightfall" storyline is that it was plotted in November of 1991 and the unfortunate revision of DC history which I can understand is that none of the guys that were involved with that are currently working on it. They forget to mention that Norm Breyfogle, Jim Aparo and I were there when they helped plot that thing. It's frustrating to see it be so successful and not be able to reap any of the benefits especially since I was the one that suggested a back injury. After Joe Montana had that surgery and bounced back so quickly, I thought, "Gee, neat story," and that's what led me to that particular suggestion. But when I did *Detective* it was selling about one quarter what it's selling now.

***JM:** Bummer.*

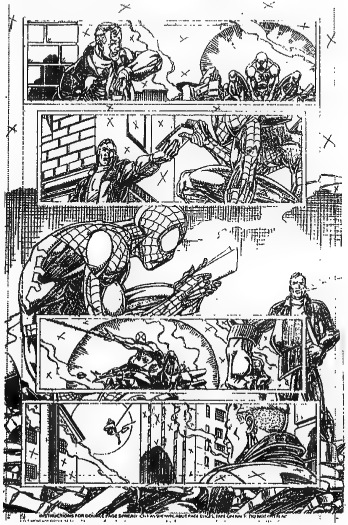
TL: Yes. I thought that the second *Batman* movie would help the sales on the books like they did on the first one but unfortunately it was more of a backlash because people hated that movie so much.

***JM:** Are you saying that because of the movie, people stopped buying Batman titles?*

TL: Apparently. I frankly think Tim Burton is an awful director because he can't do storytelling and a director is suppose to tell a story. There's not a real coherent story in either movie.

***JM:** You're right. It was just a bunch of stuff thrown together to look cool.*

TL: I sort of got off-track as far as favorite comics, though. To be honest, there's not many I can think of. I'm sort of biased because I mainly read books not so much for the stories but for the artists I like. I'm really looking forward to Frank Miller's new *Sin City* stuff that's supposed to

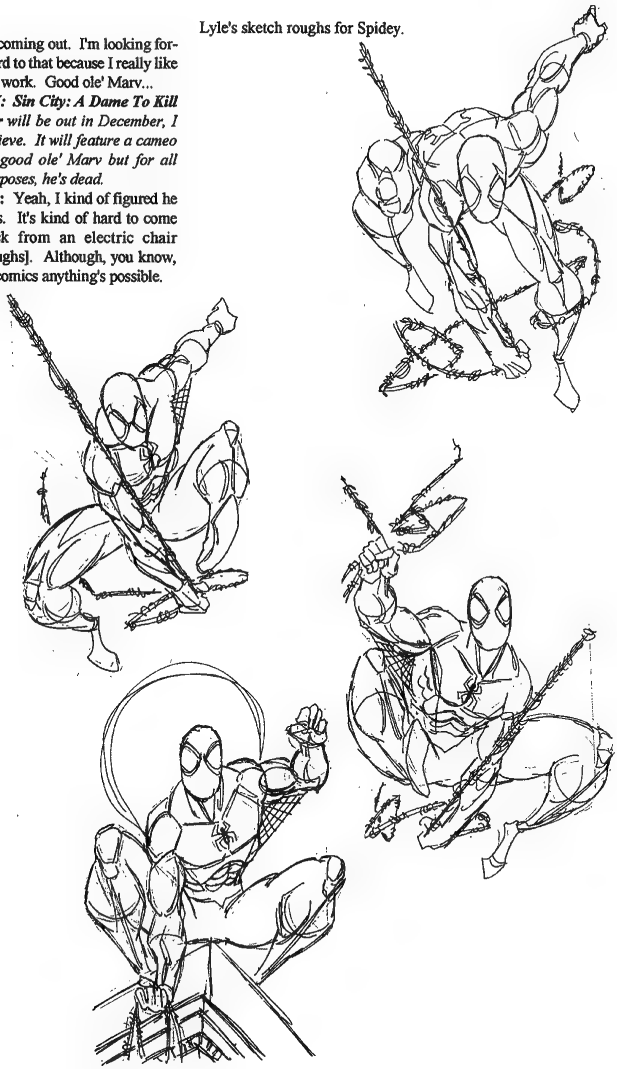


be coming out. I'm looking forward to that because I really like his work. Good ole' Marv...

JM: Sin City: A Dame To Kill For will be out in December, I believe. It will feature a cameo by good ole' Marv but for all purposes, he's dead.

TL: Yeah, I kind of figured he was. It's kind of hard to come back from an electric chair [laughs]. Although, you know, in comics anything's possible.

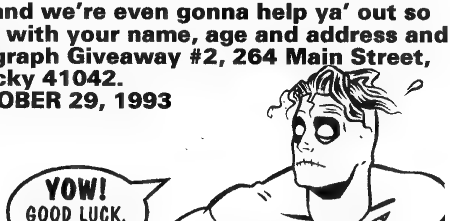
Lyle's sketch roughs for Spidey.



Autograph Giveaway #2

DON'T GET MAD! GET MADMAN!!

You heard right. Get a copy of *Madman Adventures #1* signed by the one, the only, Michael Allred! All ya' gotta do is write down the name of Michael's wife on a piece of paper (and we're even gonna help ya' out so don't fret) along with your name, age and address and send it to: Autograph Giveaway #2, 264 Main Street, Florence, Kentucky 41042.
DEADLINE: OCTOBER 29, 1993



HER NAME IS...
LA?RA
(pretty easy, huh?)

Autograph Giveaway #3

ARE YA' GETTING T'D OFF?

Win yourself a signed copy of *Mr.T and the T-Force #1*! Signed by who? Mr.T, fool! Look, go out and get yourself a pencil then sit down and write the names of the characters that starred with Mr. T in the A-Team and the name of the character T played himself. For an extra prize, also give the name of one of the character's invisible pet dog! Send that in with your name, age and address to: Autograph Giveaway #3, 264 Main Street, Florence, KY 41042.
DEADLINE: OCTOBER 29, 1993

"DO IT, FOOL! DON'T BE MESSIN' AROUND! MR.T BE WAITIN'!"

COMICS

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Comic News Flash

Defiant Changes Title of First Book

Defiant, a new comic book publishing company, announced that it plans to change the name of its first title from *Plasm* to *Warriors of Plasm*, according to Jim Shooter, founder and president of Defiant. The title change is part of Shooter's effort to reach a 'gentlemanly resolution' to threatened legal action from Marvel Comics for trademark infringement; Marvel felt that the Plasm title was too similar to its 'Plasmer' character.

"While we did not feel that our title posed any trademark confusion, we also did not want to butt heads with Marvel," said Shooter. "We are a small shop that is very excited about launching its first title this summer. We've got better things to do than hassle over this."

The first appearance of the property formerly called *Plasm* was in a unique trading card set released by The River Group under license from Defiant. Called the *Plasm Zero Issue Trading Card Set*, it consists of 150 cards that when fitted together in a special album form a comic book which tells the first story of *Plasm* – a world where everything is genetically engineered. This revolutionary new way of combining cards and comics, developed by Defiant, proved to be an instant hit.

The trading card set had already appeared before the title change was decided upon. Issue #1, the first traditional comic book featuring the property, will be released in August and will bear the *Warriors of Plasm* logo.

Jim Shooter founded Defiant in 1993. The company is based in New York City.

Spawn Gets Eclipsed

Following Todd McFarlane's video presentation at the Diamond Seminar (in which he, too, discussed the *Spawn/Batman* crossover), retailers attending the Image presentation were treated to a surprise guest: Eclipse Publications' own Beau Smith, who stunned the audience when he announced that Eclipse would be handling all licensing for Todd McFarlane's *Spawn*.

Calling Spawn the "Batman of the 21st Century," Smith stated that Eclipse would, essentially, be acting as Spawn's public relations firm, dedicated to working towards global recognition of the character. Among the projects in development: a 30-second *Spawn* commercial from the special effects wizards at Industrial Light and Magic (*Jurassic Park*).

In other (post-Seminar) Image news: Negative retailer reaction to Image's announcement of a planned crossover in the fall has prompted the publisher to cancel its plans for the saga. Instead, Image will concentrate on improved shipping of their current titles.

Comic News

AC News

Prints and Stand-Ups Released

Brad Gorby is at it again, this time putting brush and pen to work on the dark and mysterious Nightveil, sorceress supreme of the Femforce, on the Femforce Limited Edition Print #2. A fine art-type pen and ink illustration printed on high quality ultra-white stock, suitable for framing, it is signed and numbered by the artist and produced in the extremely limited edition of 150 prints. The last *Femforce* print that was offered (She-Cat in May of this year) was so successful that it was a complete sell-out! In fact, there were orders for 40 more prints than were available! So don't hesitate, order yours now or there won't be any left for you to get!

Okay, AC gives in! They created a stand-up of their No. 1 heroine, Ms. Victory, strictly for display purposes when the AC crew goes on the road to make convention appearances. But, such a tremendous response was given to it that a way had to be found to mass-produce it and make it available to all the fans.

So, here she is, Ms. V., in her red hot now costume, flying up to defeat some foul villain. She will be beautifully silkscreened, in all her full-color glory, onto sturdy 3/8" foam-core board and die-cut into the shape of the designs' outline. She comes with a strong foam-core base that easily snaps into guides on her back, so that she stands up easily on any flat surface.

Based on a design by C. Bradford Gorby, this is sure to be a highly prized collectable.

Blackbird News

Blackbird is proud to release a new b&w 48-page anthology edited by Richard Klaw and featuring a slew of creative talents. It will be scary how fast this terrifying new book will scream off the shelves this October. *Omnibus: Creature Features* spotlights a new story of septic tank nightmares by noted horror writer Joe R. (*Jonah Hex*) Lansdale and hot artist Ted (Dark Horse's *Machine*) Naifeh among other stories all featuring horrifying creatures by some of the finest new talent around, all perfect bound behind a monstrous glow-in-the-dark fully painted cover. The front cover is painted by Darrin LeBlanc, the back by Kenneth Huey. Horribly breathtaking, turn out the lights and this will be the one book that leaps out and grabs you. In this 48-page monster anthology, be prepared to witness alien tortures, terrifying transformations and a journey to the depths of hell. This perfect bound one-shot compendium is printed on Blackbird's usual quality white paper and card stock covers, is for mature readers and bears the disclaimer, and will retail for $3.75 US.

Caliber News

Anthology On Fire With Talents

Negative burn, an anthology is the sizzling new book from Caliber, featuring the best in new and established talents! Leading off this issue will be a special feature starring Jeff Smith's *Bone*! Jeff will give us a sneak peek into the layout and design of the popular series. Brian Bolland's *Mr. Mamoulian* continues, and from the pages of Bob Burden's *Flaming Carrot* comes the tale of the mysteryman *The Panic*! Fan Favorite Craig Hamilton brings us the light hearted philosophical *Poppy*, and from Marvel's *Fetus Arcadius* comes Marc Erickson's *The Great Frog Ball*. Also included is *Lazaretto VI* from Brent Trammel and the cover story features a prelude of *Black Mist* from James Pruett and Avido Khahaifa, which will be an upcoming series from Caliber Press.

Too Hot To Handle

Fire, written and illustrated by Cleveland's own Brian Michael Bendis, will be released in Sep-

tember, 1993 by Caliber Press.

The book is a unique, globe-spanning, film-noir type spy-thriller. There will be two, forty-eight page black and white books with a special cover price of only $2.95 each!

Featured in the *Advance Comics* orderbook as one of their picks for "What's Hot This Month," *Fire* tells the unique and powerful story of a young man's virgin journey through the complex world of international intelligence. Based loosely on events in the American covert community during the Reagan era, readers will be taken from the streets of Cleveland to all four corners of the globe. *Fire* is a young author's insightful view of the political of yesterday and today.

Bendis, who is twenty-five years old, has published several other comic books, as well as played an integral role in the illustration of many local and national works.

Spotlight On... Happy The Clown

From the creative team of the hit series, *Young Dracula*, comes *Happy The Clown*, a new series that plays fast and loose with violence, satire, and cutting edge sarcasm. Lenny is a quiet man whom people assume is retarded but actually, he suffers from shellshock from his military days. Lenny, often referred to as Happy because of his humorless outlook on life, had once been an operative for the CID (Covert Intelligence Division), and they pull him back in for a top secret mission. Given a clown suit as a disguise, Happy believes he is to work on assignment against an assassination plot against the President. However, the CID

actually plans to carry out their own plan against the nation's leader, and Happy is the fall guy. What does the clown part have to do with anything? That would be telling! As with *Young Dracula*, the talented duo of writer Gary Francis and artist extraordinaire David Mack will put a different spin on things as Happy ends up being a renegade agent who knows the truth about the true assassination of the President. Fans of the action-conspiracy genre should be sure not to miss the efforts of this great writer/artist team. With its tightly plotted script from Francis and the clean and unique style of David Mack's artwork, *Happy The Clown* is sure to fly off the shelves!

Comico News

Strike Force Strikes Again

The Saga of Strike Force America continues! *Strike Force America: Special Edition #3* comes in two versions. One features not only a foil-embossed cover, but a holographic foil centerspread poster of The Force as well for $4.95 (a $7.95 value), while the second has the same great story and art as the deluxe version, but without the ultra-cool foil-embossed cover and never before done holographic foil centerspread for a price of $2.50. Written by Dave DeVries and illustrated by Scott Clark and R.R. Phipps.

This issue begins a two-part storyline that is an excellent jumping on point for new readers. Collateral Damage has destroyed a maximum security prison in an attempt to free some of the most powerful villains ever created to aid him in his personal war against The Force! It's a battle royale that's got America thundering at her borders! Commander Chaos is forced to stand alone against the living weapon, and there can be only one winner of this cataclysmic confrontation!

A Gaming/Comics Hybrid

Avalon #1 also comes in two versions, written by Ed Dunphy and illustrated by James Neel with a Tony Akins cover. Swords, sorcery, and super-heroes! The saga begins in a realm where only the fantastic is possible. Where dragons, dwarfs, elves, centaurs,

and evil sorcerers exist along with earth's mightiest heroes. A mythical kingdom where magic is the reality... bordered only by imagination!

In this premiere issue, Merlin Ambrosius and the Fire-Elemental Morningstar desperately struggle to hold together a kingdom on the brink of civil war. A band of revolutionary terrorists known as the Fey are poised to seize the throne and put the power into the hands of the people... be they two-legged or not!

From the darkness, the evil spawn of a shadow and a dragon, Palavos Shadowalker, plots the total destruction of the sacred realm. With him stands the Annihilator, along with an army of goblins. The key to the success of all parties lie in the Crystal Teeth, enchanted jewels from which all the magic in the kingdom is derived!

Attention gamers! In addition to the story, each issue will feature a special section describing our fantastic character powers and backgrounds, as well as maps of the mythical land. Use this section to incorporate our characters into your games, or create an entirely new roll playing game based on the Avalonion Universe!

The deluxe version features a full cover embossment, along with an emerald-foil logo (for #3.50), which ties in with this issues' crystal teeth. The standard version does not have these enhancements and carries a cover price of $2.50.

Continuity News

Magic Arisin'

The climax of Continuity's *Deathwatch 2000* storyline will send readers into a second major crossover -- "Rise of Magic" -- which will continue to utilize special enhancements as it re-establishes the company's line of titles.

The *Deathwatch 2000* crossover consists of 20 parts that run across Continuity's current titles while launching a few new series along the way. As plot elements from the "Deathwatch" stories are resolved, others in "Rise of Magic" will emerge so that the first storyline leads straight into the second.

The main reason for virtually back-to-back crossovers: Neal Adams is trying to re-introduce and solidify the titles into a well founded universe.

"['Rise of Magic'] is a central idea to our Continuity universe," explained Adams in a recent interview, "but the way we were doing things we wouldn't have gotten to it for five years. The way we're doing it now, we're going to get to it in the four months after the 'Deathwatch' series."

The issues involved in "Rise of Magic" will become "possessed" as the characters are possessed by the magical elements in the story. The "possessed" issues will feature a stone-textured, embossed demon above the logo on the cover, and the interiors will be done on parchment style paper.

As "Rise of Magic" progresses, Adams and Continuity's chief writer Peter Stone will be laying the groundwork for another crossover that will eventually draw in many of the titles.

"The third crossover," Adams added, "which we'll run into next year, will be and intergalactic war. So, we're moving from project to project and we have little off-shoots as we go.

"Across the board now, you're going to see six books a month on a regular basis until 'Deathwatch' is over," Adams said. "That's our tendency and goal, and we haven't been forced to give up simply because we're on a schedule and we're turning out more comics."

Creative Fire News

The Fate of Shaman's Tears

"*Shaman's Tears* will live on," Mike Grell announced recently. The creator/writer/artist of the top-selling comic book has been hard at work producing *Shaman's Tears* while negotiations have been proceeding with a variety of publishers.

"*Shaman's Tears* always was intended to be an on-going series and was continually promoted as such. However, as Image Comics has announced, they are not geared to handle on-going books produced by creators who were not owners of the company," Grell stated. "We are extremely grateful that Image Comics helped get us off the ground; there is no way we could have sold a half million copies of *Shaman's Tears # 1* with any other publisher at the time."

Negotiations have been conducted since early May by Mike Gold, Creative Fire Studios' editor and business manager. "There is no shortage of publishers looking to pick up a title whose most recent issue, #3, outsold books like *Supreme*, *Shadow of the Bat*, *X-O Manowar*, *Spider-Man*, and *Legends of the Dark Knight* (source: Capital City Distribution Top Comics chart, July 1993)," Gold stated. "We're looking for a relationship with a publisher that has the resources to devote to the timely publishing, distribution and marketing of our books, freeing us to concentrate on editorial and ancillary rights." Hollywood discussions concerning *Shaman's Tears* are underway, but, as Gold notes, "I think every major comic book property has some sort of Hollywood deal in the discussion stage."

Presently, Creative Fire Studios is producing *Shaman's Tears* and two subsequent titles. All three are written by Mike Grell, who will continue drawing *Shaman's Tears*. "Relationships with creators about other projects have been underway for some time; depending upon the results of our publisher negotiations, we are likely to get involved in some sort of creator-owned shared universe," Gold disclosed.

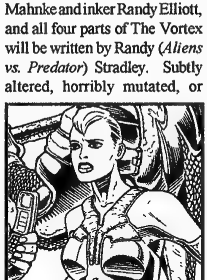
Last month, Image Comics announced they were going to disengage from a number of projects that were not created by the owners of Image Comics. "We think they made the right decision," Grell said. "These moves are in everybody's best interest, and we are appreciative of the opportunities Image Comics opened for us."

By mutual agreement, *Shaman's Tears*'s run at Image Comics will end with the fourth issue. A 64-page *Shaman's Tears* annual will follow that will contain a booklength crossover with Mike Grell's best-known creation, Jon Sable. A preview of *Bar Sinister*, the second Creative Fire series, will round out the annual. *Shaman's Tears* will resume regular monthly publication two months after the annual.

Dark Horse News

Vortex Week 1: Division 13

Dark Horse continues to serve up Comics' Greatest World with the release of the final chapter in their superhero saga: The Vortex, with all four chapters including a free promo poster. Week One: *Division 13* features the creative talents of penciller and cover artist Doug (*The Mask*) Mahnke and inker Randy Elliott, and all four parts of The Vortex will be written by Randy (*Aliens vs. Predator*) Stradley. Subtly altered, horribly mutated, or



crazy, the inmates of Block 13 are all victims of accidents or government-sponsored experiments at Cinnabar Flats U.S. Army Research Center -- imprisoned without trial in a facility that gives a whole new meaning to the term "maximum security." Only three individuals have ever escaped from Block 13, and now they're back to help those unfortunates still held there. But when the other-worldly Seekers launch an attack on the base, Frank Lamb and the other members of Division 13 find that their crusade may turn out to be a suicide mission!

Vortex Week 2: Hero Zero

The Vortex marches on with the release of *Hero Zero*, featuring a cover by Art Adams and interior pencils and inks by Eric (*The Blue Witch of Oz*) Shanower. David MacRae is like any normal thirteen-year-old boy, except that in addition to skateboards and schoolbooks, David is in telepathic contact with the mysterious entity known as Zero. While unimaginable chaos breaks loose at Cinnabar Flats, Zero wakes David in the dead of night and leads him out into the desert -- just in time for David to transform into Hero Zero and face the biggest, most bizarre battle of his life!

Week 3: King Tiger

The Vortex Week 3, *King Tiger*, sports a Geof Darrow cover and features the talents of penciller Paul (*Concrete*) Chadwick and inker Jimmy Palmiotti! If the middle of the Nevada desert is the last place one would expect to encounter five demons from another dimension, it's also the last place the demons expect to run into their deadliest adversary: King Tiger! The youthful mystic faces five-to-one odds, but the demons haven't counted on

Tiger's secret weapon – a 1963 Ford Thunderbird!

Week 4: Vortex

The final part in the sixteen week Comics' Greatest World is here in *Vortex*, which has a Frank Miller cover and is pencilled and inked by Bob (*The New Mutants*)

McLeod! The Army personnel at Cinnabar Flats are trained for combat situations, equipped to deal with the mutated super-humans in Block 13, and even used to monitoring the mysterious Vortex anomaly. But now something completely beyond their experience – and their planet – is tearing through the facility like a red-hot knife through butter, and everyone is running out of options fast. Just as this corner of the desert is starting to look like the dress rehearsal for the Apocalypse, a being of truly apocalyptic proportions steps out of The Vortex itself! Is he here to rescue humanity, or seal its destruction?

New Aliens Mini-Series

A stunningly new *Aliens* mini-series debuts in the form of *Aliens: Labyrinth*, coming in September. Aliens may be virtually impossible to control, but what if man could anticipate their actions? In a deep space research station, Dr. Paul Church studies Alien behavioral responses. How does an Alien track its prey? Can an Alien distinguish whether a human is armed? Will an Alien ever retreat from an attack? Test after test, patterns of behavior are revealed to Church... patterns which are predictable.

The station is carefully supervised; every precaution is taken, but everyone knows the risks. When an apparent saboteur is killed by an escaped Alien, the site of scientific research gives way to a homicide investigation. Col. Dr. Anthony Crespi, the stalwart survivor of *Aliens: Backsplash* (featured in *Dark Horse Comics #12* and *13*), suspects that the Alien subject may not have escaped on its own, and is determined to uncover the truth.

Written by surrealist comics creator Jim Woodring and illustrated by newcomer Kilian Plunkett, this intricate thriller will lead readers into what promises to be a most shattering experiment in terror. Once the doors have closed, you're on your own. Prepare to enter *Aliens: Labyrinth.*

DC News

Robin Gets Own Series

Following the unprecedented success of his three hit mini-series and the stunning events in "Knightfall" and "Knightquest," the Boy Wonder stars in his first-ever on-going series. The spectacular cover is tinted foil enhanced with multilevel embossing on heavy cardstock.

Showcasing the talents of writer Chuck (*Robin I, II,* and *III*), penciller Tom (*Adventures of Superman, The New Ttans*) Grummett, and inker Scott Hanna, *Robin #1* follows the events depicted in *Detective Comics #668*. In that issue, the new Batman and Tim Drake have a pivotal confrontation that results in Robin being barred from the Batcave.

Out on his own, with no mentor to depend on, the Boy Wonder must balance the demands of his personal life with his desire to see justice in a world that seems to grow stranger every day. In issue #1, Robin gets his own wheels, just in time to do battle with the

Speedboyz, a gang of car thieves terrorizing a Gotham City neighborhood.

Expect new villains, new challenges, and guest stars in this exciting series, including the Huntress and Dick Grayson, a.k.a. Nightwing, the Dark Knight's first partner. Ships October 5.

Outsiders Return (Sans Batman)

Storming through the DC Universe with every other hero hot on their tails are the *Outsiders*, together again in an all-new ongoing series. Kicking off with not one, but two number-one issues, the Outsiders are back with new members as well as familiar favorites, and super-hero action that bursts right off the pages. *Outsiders* promises to be tightly woven into the DC Universe and features frequent conflict with other heroes, including the new Batman.

The two number-one issues, *Outsiders #1 (Alpha)* and *Outsiders #1 (Omega)*, ship simultaneously for maximum impact. Each of the two issues stands alone as a complete story, while telling a unified tale when read together. The issues share four pages where the stories intersect.

Both *Outsiders #1*'s each begin as the former teammates -- Katana, Halo, and Looker -- gather in Geo-Force's native Markovia for the christening of that land's infant king-to-be. All heck breaks loose when the small country is overrun by a vampiric invasion led by Roderick, a powerful vampire lord with mysterious links to Geo-Force's past. As the heroes fight different battles in each issue to obliterate the undead invaders, one of the core members of the Outsiders meets a terrible fate, and Roderick successfully frames the heroes in the slaughter of scores of innocents. By the end of these two issues, the Outsiders are reassembled, now outlaws more than ever, with three new members: Wylde, Technocrat, and Faust. Mike W. Barr, writer of the original *Outsiders* series as well as *Star Trek: The Mirror Universe Saga, Batman: Year Two*, and *Batman: Full Circle*, returns to the heroes he co-created, with artists Paul (*Ex-Mutants*) Pelletier and Robert (*X-Men Adventures*) supplying the striking, action-packed art. Ships September 28 with a retail price of $1.75 each.

Escape Artists Team Up

Harry Houdini was the first media star of the 20th century, a man fascinated by the unexplained -- the dark corners of existence unilluminated by Edison's electric lamps. Houdini's greatest adventure began the day he crossed paths with one of his era's most compelling enigmas, Gotham City's Bat-Man.

In *Batman & Houdini: The Devil's Workshop*, an exquisitely painted *Elseworlds* adventure, the World's Greatest Escape Artist joins forces with the World's Greatest Detective to investigate the mysterious disappearances of some of Gotham City's street children.

Individually and together, writers Howard Chaykin and John Francis Moore have been responsible for such groundbreaking successes as *The Flash* TV show, *The Shadow* mini-series, and the graphic novel *Ironwolf: Fires of the Revolution*. Joining their talents with the brooding intensity of Mark Chiarello's fully-painted artwork, they perfectly evoke the feel of America of the early 1900s, a nation so dazzled by the wonder of technological marvels that it could be blind to the dangers of a less naive world. *Batman & Houdini: The Devil's Workshop* is a 64-page Prestige Format one-shot that ships September 28 and retails for $5.95.

Superman: The Dark Knight

At the peak of Superman's popularity -- following the resolution of "Reign of the Supermen" and with the advent of the new live-action ABC television series -- DC presents the first Superman *Elseworlds*, the tale of the tortured life of a very different Man of Steel.

A tiny spacecraft launched from the doomed planet Krypton has traversed the sea of space and reached the safety of Earth. The ship descends through the atmosphere, the brightest star in an ink-black sky, and crashes by a roadside. A man and a woman brave the flames and find within the ship a precious bundle, a child from the stars swaddled in red-and-blue blankets. The couple, Thomas and Martha Wayne, take the child home and name him Bruce, thus beginning a strange tale of twisted fates, broken dreams, and faith rekindled by love.

When the Waynes are gunned down in the streets of Gotham, the Last Son of Krypton's life takes a terrible turn and he is transformed into a nocturnal predator with incredible, unearthly powers, a superhuman with faint regard for truth or the American way, a Bat-Man whose obsession is justice... and vengeance.

Superman: Speeding Bullets is written by J.M. DeMatteis, who has displayed his virtuosity in such projects as *Justice League, Mercy, The Last One,* and *Spider-Man*, and illustrated by Eduardo Barreto, artist of the critically acclaimed *Elseworlds* projects *Batman: Master of the Future* and *Martian Manhunter: American Secrets*. It is a 48-page one-shot in the Prestige Format, shipping September 14 and retailing for $4.95.

Defiant News

Upcoming Releases

This is a listing of Defiant's future releases, although nothing is set in stone for the later ones. First up is *Warriors of Plasm #1*, a monthly, launching in August 1993 and featuring the creative team of David Lapham (penciller), Mike Witherby (inker), and Jim Shooter (writer). As a note of interest, the series title has been changed from *Plasm* to *Warriors of Plasm*. It seems that Marvel has a character named "Plasmer" in a book that is to be published in the UK. Marvel threatened a lawsuit unless the title was changed. Although neither Defiant nor their counsel see any conflict between "Plasm" (a world) and "Plasmer" (a character), in the interests of being gentlemanly, the title has been changed.

Next up is *Dark Dominion #1*, which launches in October '93 as a monthly series. It is penciled by Steve Ditko, inked by Steve Leialoha, and created and written by Jim Shooter.

The Good Guys #1 will be released in November '93. The creative team consists of penciller Grey, writer Mike W. Barr, creator Jim Shooter, and an as-yet unnamed inker.

Home for the Holidays, a special 64-page *Warriors of Plasm* graphic novel in the tradition of *Dark Knight*, to be released in November '93. Written by Len Wein.

War Dancer #1 launches in January '94 as a monthly co-created, penciled, and written by Alan Weiss and co-created by Jim Shooter.

Charlemagne #1 will be out in February '94, penciled by David Klein, written by Philip Nutman, and co-created by Jim Shooter and Deborah Purcell. It will be a monthly series.

The launch dates after *Charlemagne* have not yet been decided, although a good deal of development work has been done on additional titles. Chris Claremont will be writing *Prudence & Caution* at some point in 1994. Other titles include *Glory, Dogs of War,* and *Mongrel*. Launch dates will be made public as soon as they are firmed up.

Plasm Becomes A Great Success

The initial shipment of *Warriors of Plasm #1* that arrives on store shelves this week captured approximately two percent of the market, during the peak August sales month, according to Jim Shooter, president and founder of six-month-old Defiant. The story, written by Shooter, was penciled by David Lapham and inked by Mike Witherby. Shooter, 41, now believes *Warriors of*

Plasm #1 will premiere as the third-largest selling book of the month. It also piqued the interest of Marvel Comics, which filed a lawsuit against Defiant claiming trademark infringement.

"I started this company on the proposition that the industry needs storytellers who can prompt a new generation of kids to tie a towel around their necks and fly around the living room," says Shooter. "The industry is in obvious agreement. This is tremendously exciting for all of us here. We have worked to cross a 'reality veil' of our own -- into marketplace ratification of our work. Unfortunately, Marvel is working in its own reality veil, one in which it believes our trademarked title *Warriors of Plasm* infringes on a character called 'Plasmer,' in a comic which has yet to be published."

In July the series' title changed from *Plasm* to *Warriors of Plasm*, as part of a proposed "gentlemanly resolution" of a threatened legal action from Marvel Comics for trademark infringement. Marvel Comics felt that the *Plasm* title was too similar to its "Plasmer" character. Despite that effort, Marvel filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court, for the Southern District of New York, seeking a preliminary injunction on an expedited basis, which could result in a judge's decision within two weeks.

Defiant is off to a fast start, based on Shooter's two-fold dedication to the storyteller's art and industry innovation coupled with his passion to serve and expand the marketplace. The first example of this approach was Defiant's decision to license The River Group to launch *Warriors of Plasm Zero Issue Trading Card Set*, which marked the first time that a comics universe was introduced via trading cards.

Next, beginning last month and continuing through October 15, Defiant is searching the country for seven children to populate *The Good Guys* series, which first arrives in stores in November. In June Shooter launched a continuing series of "How to Create Comics" seminars for would-be comic book writers, creators, and cartoonists. Begun in Anaheim and Nashville, the seminars will arrive next in San Diego (August 21) and Philadelphia (October 9).

Other new entries in the Defiant launch schedule include *Dark Dominion #1*, premiering in October; *Home for the Holidays*, a special 64-page *Warriors of Plasm* graphic novel to be released in November; *War Dancer*, launching in February 1994, and *Charlemagne*, March 1994.

Eclipse News

Parts Unknown Gets New Mini

In November of 1993, Eclipse Comics will be unleashing *Parts Unknown: The Next Invasion*, due to fantastic response from fans and retailers on the first *Parts Unknown* mini-series which debuted in July of 1992. *Parts Unknown* was a ground breaking series for the F/X line. It was the first non-film/video related comic book to ever be sold in national video stores. The video chains reported excellent sales on the series. For many, it was the first time hat they had ever had to make reorders on a non-video product.

The key to the success of *Parts Unknown* was due to the fact that the series was targeted to movie goers of box office hits such as *Aliens, Die Hard, Total Recall, Predator, Terminator* and *Bladerunner*. The sales proved that it worked.

The F/X line also won the coveted AMP award (American Marketing and Promotions Award) for the unique "Scratch and Win" promotion in each F/X issue. The winner of the contest won an all expense paid trip to Hollywood, plus other prizes. The contest was well received and it was the first time that anything like it had ever been done in the comics industry.

Parts Unknown: The Next Invasion will take place two years after the fall of the first Scalon invasion. Detectives Pendelton Spurr and Maria Lucci now head up the city's elite undercover operation team that takes on the harder cases that need unorthodox methods. They pick and choose their own cased load from a file that is heavy with strange cases. This will prove to be the strangest case of all!

While on unrelated missions, Spurr and Lucci once again come across the Scalons. This time the game is different. The new Scalon invaders have learned from the previous mission. They are craftier, more cunning, and have become even more genetically enhanced. This time they have the help of a deadly corporate executive -- Cynthia Barr. She's not above joining the aliens to get

the power she craves. With the head of the new alien invasion set up as the CEO of the country's most powerful corporation, there's no telling what evil will unfold. (Well, there is, but the creative team won't tell us yet.)

The series promises to give the readers all of the action, adventure, scientific fantasy, gut-wrenching battles that the first series did. Plus more! *Parts Unknown: The Next Invasion* will be written by Beau (*Black Terror, Green Lantern*) Smith. The artwork will be done by Brad (*Femme Force, Parts Unknown, Blood and Roses*) Gorby. Gorby's innovating art style will once again throw thrills into the laps of the fans with his new *Parts Unknown* art.

The series promises to bring the readers more of the same exciting action and story telling that the first series did. The gimmick, enhancement, or special feature with series two is... it's even better than the first series!

Fleetway News

Not a Chinese Junk

His name is Larry Dennehy, and though he's been called worse, he'll answer to "Junker" – an ex-cop now a glorified garbage man roaming the spaceways in search of salvage. And when he's made a big haul, what could be better than cashing it in and making merry with the local females?

A steaming hangover and a mysterious rash was all Larry was looking forward to when he put into the seedy backwater planet he was making his delivery to. That was until he heard the scream of a blue-skinned woman being attacked. Old habits die hard, and before Dennehy realized it, he'd entered a world of political intrigue, high-stakes smuggling, and certain death!

Written by Michael Fleisher and illustrated by John Ridgway, *Junker* is the story of a man with a bitter past coming to terms with a life he thought he had put behind him. A former harbor cop, he's been reduced to picking up space wrecks for spare change. Learn how he came to this low point in his life, and what he'll do now that he has a chance to redeem himself.

Junker #1 of *4* has fully painted color in deluxe format containing material never before published in the U.S. and retailing for $2.95.

Vertigo Team on Zenith

After saving the Earth from imminent destruction, you'd think Zenith would have some time to relax and kick back. Instead, he's the target of a super-powered assassin by the name of Warhead. The timely intervention by the CIA in charge of overseeing super-powered individuals (and you wondered where your tax money went!) saves Zenith from a grisly

death, but gets him involved with U.S.-UK politics and a pair of mad (aren't they always?!) scientists, each with his own agenda. What does fate have in store for this 3rd generation super-hero? And what's the missing 2nd generation doing in a parallel universe?

Originally presented in the pages of *2000AD Showcase*, *Zenith - Phase 2* enters the multi-dimensions where the infinite variations of single themes exist. Written and illustrated by Vertigo's Grant Morrison and Steve Yeowell, *Zenith - Phase 2 Book 1* picks up where the first series left off, and follows this most reluctant Mega-being into a labyrinth of lies and secret origins. Cover art is created by collage illustrator Dave DeVries, and it retails for $1.95.

Goofa Man News

Issue #6 is finally here! It's true! After two years, the latest issue of *3-D Pete's Big Orbit Comics* is finally ready! You probably thought 3-D Pete was an unshaven drifter by now. But he's not! Since the last issue of *B.O. Comics*, Pete has appeared in such publications as *Starlog*

and *The Funny Times*.

Issue #6 of *B.O. Comics* has a big ol' robot cartoon (a two-page spread featuring many robots from film and television); Wolf the cat, feline terror; and the dreaded mall pollsters! Plus more!

B.O. Comics is a 24-page b&w digest-sized (5 1/2" x 8 1/2") comic created by Mike Fisher. Mike lives in Charlotte, NC, working as the graphics director for *The Charlotte Observer* newspaper. In his free time he creates cartoons for various publications and also creates space science infographics for *Final Frontier* magazine.

Send $1.75 per copy to:
B.O. Comics #6
Fisher
10701 Appleberry Lane
Charlotte, NC 28214

Please make checks payable to Mike Fisher.

HERE'S THE SITUATION, EMPEROR. IF WE CAN PUT MILLER BEYOND OUT OF COMMISSION THERE'S NO WAY OUT OF HARMONY
INTERESTING. GENERAL BLOODLUST, WHAT ABOUT THAT ROAD BRIDGE?

Hammer and Anvil News

Hammer and Anvil Press presents *Kip #3*, a black and white bi-monthly series with a cover price of $2.50. In this issue, Kip sends for his two loyal, albeit maniacal, generals: Bloodlust and Saddisto. There in the war room of Kip's refuge, our principal players devise a plan to annex Harmony for themselves. Kip's own personal physician, Doctor Heliophroggs, enters the picture and suggests brain-washing the youth of Harmony to fight for the cause of Kip. Meanwhile, at town hall, the center of power in Harmony, we meet Mayor Bradley -- the town's most corrupt elected official -- as he confronts Father George O'Malley -- Harmony's spiritual leader. The conflict in Harmony begins to take shape...

men haven't much changed; Horns discovers beer, pot, and TV reruns; and Ballzout discovers a problem with pants. In the meantime, an age-old enemy discovers them.

The Gross imprint also serves up *Reiki Warriors #3* by Eric Dinehart and Daerick Gross this month. Magic seems to be on the upswing in Los Angeles! As the Reiki Warriors spend a quiet day working out, kicking back, and shopping, their leisure time is interrupted by the arrival of three would-be mystics named HuDu, HocUm, and Steve (oh, my!).

Hero News

New Gross Imprint Title, More

The Jinni # 1 is a 44-page deluxe format book published under the Daerick Gross imprint from Studio G and features the talents of Brian Hilbert and Scott Pentzer, with a cover by Daerick Gross. What happens when the supernatural goes mad? All Hell breaks loose... in every sense of the term. A maddened jinni is freed and draws the attention of the local police, the government, an ancient witch, the other jin, Satan, and even Death itself. And all because he grants a few wishes. This is not a genie of pleasant dreams. Plus: A Reiki Warriors solo series starring the leather-clad Squamus, by Faye (*Queen of the Damned*) Perozich!

Not to be forgotten is *Mythfits' #2*, also under the Gross imprint and boasting the creative team of Spike Steffenhagen, Roman Morales, and Dennis Cramer. In the second issue of *Mythfits,* this group of mythological monsters settles into 20th century New York City. Equis Fantail discovers that

Image News

Wildstar Pushed Back

Wildstar was conceived and solicited for as a four issue mini-series. Recently, co-creators Al Gordon and Jerry Ordway, together with Image Comics, decided to cancel the order on issues #3 and #4 and re-solicit them, rather than ship these titles several months late into a marketplace that is already glutted with product. Given the high quantity ordered on these and the previous two issues, everyone

involved though it unfair to leave the retailers and readers hanging as to when the issues were going to ship. "Both Al and I agree," notes Ordway, "that there is much more effort involved in producing a book on our own -- far more than we could ever have imagined -- and our goal continues to be to make *Wildstar* the best it can be. It's all taken much longer than planned, and as we work diligently to complete the final issues and see tem through the long process that gets them from our desks to readers' hands -- we apologize to all for the lateness."

Ordway continues, "We also want to assure everyone that *Wildstar* has not been cancelled nor has it changed, strategically, in any way from what we first planned. (It has changed creatively -- that's all part of working together on a book and making it better as you go along.) We appreciate all the compliments we've received on the two issues that have been published so far -- and all the concerns expressed when people hear the unfounded rumor that *Wildstar* has been cancelled."

Wildstar #3 is now scheduled to ship in September and *Wildstar #4* in October.

Image Cuts Back

In an attempt to return to the super-hero roots which marked its initial success, Image Comics has announced its plans to cut back on the total number of titles currently being solicited. A number of second year Image titles will be affected by the cutback, among them *Tribe, Shaman's Tears, Stupid,* and *Trencher*.

Image publisher Tony Lobito stated Image is willing and committed to publishing the remainder of each of these mini-series as they were originally solicited. However, all of the artists involved in the production of the affected titles have been notified that if their books are not completed in a timely manner, Image will cancel the titles with no plans for resolicitation.

"We feel this is unfortunate," said Lobito, "but we also believe this was our best option to assure the continued viability of Image in the face of the on-coming glut which threatens the prosperity of our marketplace."

Lobito also stated that Image is proud of each and every one of the titles affected, adding that Image has been pleased to work with the many talented creators involved in their production. "They added an element of variety to the Image line and contributed to Image's success, just as Image added to their future success, allowing many of them to capture their largest audiences ever."

In the months to come, Image plans to return to the super-hero roots which marked the year and a half old company's initial success, expanding on the Image Universe by spinning off books from its six original titles, *Spawn, Youngblood, Wild C.A.T.S, Shadowhawk, Cyberforce,* and *The Savage Dragon*.

Said Lobito, "The guys are all very excited about the current restructuring of the Image line. The fans have spoken and this is what they want."

Other recent Image cancellations include the *Tribe Limited Edition Collectors Portfolio* and Malibu/Image's *Operation Urban Storm*. Similarly, *Doom's IV #1-3* and the *Phantom Force* mini-series have been cancelled, and will be resolicited at a later date.

Spawn and The Dark Knight

The news is true: Todd McFarlane's Spawn meets the original Caped Crusader in *Batman/Spawn* -- a two issue, non-continuity mini-series scheduled for shipping sometime in February. But what of the Toddler's other endeavors, you ask? Well, industry scuttlebutt maintains that Todd has handed over *Spawn*'s creative reins to other writers and artists -- like Grant Morrison and Greg Capullo -- while he works on the project. Capullo, noted for his past work on Marvel's *X-Force, Quasar,* and various *What If* stories, is a natural for the dark whirlwind world of *Spawn*. Issue #16 of *Spawn*, Morrison and Capullo's first issue, promises a very mysterious turn in the *Spawn* storyline. It is one that will cause reader's heads to jerk and spin in amazement. (No, Linda Blair has nothing to do with it.)

Innovation News

This is it! Innovation scores again as Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's best-selling science fiction novel, *Lucifer's Hammer*, comes to comics in a six-issue limited series. It is the story of a

massive comet's collision with Earth and the impact (pun intended) this event has on mankind as they struggle for survival in a post-apocalyptic world. Fully painted in the Innovation tradition of such titles as *The Vampire Lestat* and *Beauty & The Beast*, this book will appeal to art aficionados as well as fans of well-crafted literature.

In full color, *Lucifer's Hammer #1*, "The Anvil," is adapted by Terry Collins and fully-painted by Roger Vilela, with covers by Vilela.

Kitchen Sink News

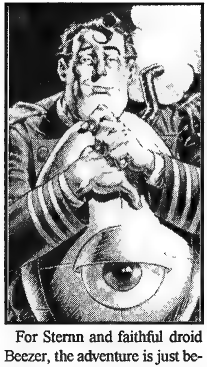
Captain Sternn Goes Color

He's a lovable heel and he's been around a long time -- since 1980 in *Heavy Metal* and again in the *Heavy Metal* movie.

He's Bernie Wrightson's *Captain Sternn*, and this September, Kitchen Sink Press embarks on a five-issue, full color series of 48-page books that reintroduces the unscrupulous Sternn, his robot-pal Beezer, nasty industrialist Filmore Coffers, the impossible muscle-man Hanover Fiste, and a host of other great characters, to a public panting for good comics! *Captain Sternn: Running Out of Time* retails for $4.95 and is for all ages.

What's the story?

Somewhere in the future, Earth is a giant consumerist hell, presided over by Filmore Coffers, the madman behind Cosmic-Coola. While millions of people are busy swigging Coffers' tasty, super-addictive soft drink, a new crisis for the planet has emerged in the form of... the walking dead!



For Sternn and faithful droid Beezer, the adventure is just beginning. First stop: the lab of "genius in a bucket," Aldo Gorney, who has his own theories about the living dead plague. Then it's a raucous, roller coaster ride back in time to the Pleistocene Age to find metamorphosing muscle-man Hanover Fiste, and the stolen vault that holds the secrets to the Cosmic-Coola empire. But the dinosaur heads mounted in Coffers' office suggest that he has his own doorway to the past, as well as an ace up his sleeve that may spell certain doom for Sternn, and the Earth itself!

Captain Sternn: Running Out of Time is filled with Bernie Wrightson's great art -- whether he's drawing dinosaurs, the living dead, pretty women, rock-jawed heroes, or crazy businessmen, Wrightson is one of the best around.

Bernie Wrightson's *Captain Sternn* began in the early 1980s in the pages of *Heavy Metal* magazine and the popular *Heavy Metal* movie. Wrightson's career in comics stretches back to 1969, and he would quickly go on to co-create *Swamp Thing* with writer Len Wein. His past credits include work on the *Frankenstein* graphic adaptation, and *Batman: The Cult*. But, *Captain Sternn* is Bernie's baby, and for those who are having trouble finding the "Interstellar Toybox" stories in old issues of Jim Starlin's *Dreadstar*, *Running Out of Time* will provide the Sternn fix you've been craving!

Watch for issue one of Bernie Wrightson's *Captain Sternn: Running Out of Time* this September, from Kitchen Sink Press.

Blue Block by Woodring

Jim Woodring -- multiple Harvey Award nominee this year -- and writer Scott Deschaine collaborate on a full color vision of a repressed society of the future in September's *Blue Block*.

In it, a man and his family -- inhabitants of a city block eerily lit by blue lights, a control and monitoring mechanism employed by the government -- attempt to find freedom. Along with this, a stray cat, its head enclosed in the rim of a broken milk bottle, forms a symbolic bond with the family.

Blue Block is a co-publishing venture between Deschaine's Discovery Comics and Kitchen Sink Press. *Blue Block* features the brilliant art and color work of Jim Woodring, nominated for cartoonist of the year and many other Harvey Awards. The 32-page comic is for all ages and retails for $2.95.

In the *Blue Block*, women give birth to children with tails. Patrols vehicles hover over the area, keeping tabs of the citizens, making sure they're placid and kept mildly drugged. The children don't know what stars in the night look like, or what sunshine is, either. The people in *Blue Book* are poor and suppressed -- until the stray cat inspires one man to take action.

Blue Block is told visually, with little dialogue. Deschaine's subtle

storytelling and the power of Woodring's art carry the story along with facial and body expressions, punctuated with spectacular action as the Blue Block inhabitants fight back. *Blue Block* is vividly yet subtly colored; it is a dreamlike tale told emphatically and ultimately, triumphantly.

Jim Woodring is justly considered one of the top artists in comics. With Scott Deschaine, he has fashioned out of *Blue Block* a book that will only add to his reputation. Be sure to order this great book in September!

Maximortal Concludes

In 1993, two kids from Slumburg conjured up a costumed super-hero named True-Man. It proved to be the perfect idea for an imperfect time. When given life, their creation took the world by storm, and changed it forever -- though not in the way you might expect. This is the tale of Rick Veitch's *The Maximortal*, and in September, King Hell Press and KSP offer the harrowing finale in *The Maximortal* #7.

The Maximortal #7 is a 32-page, full color comic book printed on high-quality text paper, and retails for $2.95. It is for mature readers.

In the barren wasteland of Visitation, California, a farming couple stumbles upon a meteor carrying unusual cargo: a three-toed child with super-human abilities. In Slumburg, Pennsylvania, two struggling cartoonists undergo a revelation, and create an invincible costumed champion for a troubled age: True-Man. And in Los Alamos, New Mexico, Dr. Robert Uppenheimer, the scientist behind a world-shattering device, discovers a being with the powers of the apocalypse.

The stage is set for the mind-blowing conclusion to the first novel in *The Maximortal* cycle. After a top-secret meeting at Los Alamos with the greatest scientific minds of the 20th century, the US government succeeds in disintegrating the child True-Man. But in doing so, they unwittingly unleash True-Man's power into the hands of the visionary, El Guano, assuring that a reign of death and destruction has only just begun.

Rick Veitch's past works include *Abraxas and the Earthman* and *The One* for Epic. Most notably, Veitch enjoyed enormous success as the writer of DC's *Swamp Thing* in the late 1980s. His run on the series ended with the suppression of the controversial issue #88, which chronicled Swamp Thing's meeting with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Veitch went on to form his own imprint, King Hell Press, and in the early 1990s embarked on one of his most ambitious projects

ever -- The King Hell Heroica. This exhaustive examination of the super-hero genre began with *Bratpack*, Veitch's take on the costumed hero sidekick phenomenon. In 1992, the saga continued with *The Maximortal*, a black satire on the proliferation of the comic book super-hero, the creators behind the characters, and the predatory environment of the comic book industry emerging from its infant stages.

The Maximortal series is etched with satiric acid -- and tells a great story to boot! Be sure to get the great conclusion to the first *Maximortal* novel, coming in September.

Lightning News

Solution to Poly-bagging Found

Lightning Comics researched the possibility of poly-bagging their comic books. Many reports in the industry reached the con-

clusion that poly-bagging comic books increases sales. Of course, increasing sales is good for ev-

eryone involved in the business of comics. Lightning would like to reach the goal of 250,000 copies for their books and believes that poly-bagging will help in reaching this goal.

While researching consumer attitude towards poly-bagging, Lightning Comics discovered a completely different attitude towards the process. Most consumers didn't like poly-bags because they don't allow them to see the interior of the book. They said they were suspicious of poly-bagged books because they felt they'd be disappointed with the interior artwork and stories -- in some cases they felt they were being tricked into buying a book because of an exciting cover and the collectibility of an unopened/opened poly-bagged comic.

Lightning Comics has found the answer to both increase sales as well as keep the consumers excited about the poly-bagged books for October: "In a Flash" Preview Guide.

The "In a Flash" Preview Guide will be clearly printed on the back outside cover of all our poly-bagged comics. All of the poly-bags will be clear so consumers can see the Preview Guide. The Preview Guide is set up just like the back of videocassette movie box. It will have several color pictures of interior pages of the comic, as well as a storyline synopsis, which tells the consumer about the story of the book they're going to purchase.

This "In a Flash" Preview Guide is an industry first. It was developed by Lightning Comics in their continuing efforts towards "Taking the comic industry by storm!"

Judgment Day Upon Us

Lightning Comics is scheduled to debut its first super-hero team in September.

Judgment Day, the five-member team, consists of Safeguard, Salubrio, X-Treme, Scattergun, and Gridloch.

They are going to be the hottest group of super-heroes for the 90s and beyond.

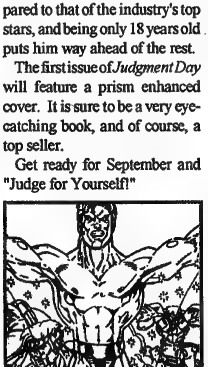
S.C.A.N. (Specialized Covert Action Network) is a secret military organization in charge of super powered agents. After killing a Soviet Nuclear inspector, S.C.A.N.'s last team defected and became outlaws.

S.C.A.N. assembled a new team -- Judgment Day -- to replace and hunt down their rogue agents.

18 year old Karl Kerschl, of Canada, will be illustrating this action-packed book for Lightning Comics. This is Karl's introduction into the world of comics. Already his art is being compared to that of the industry's top stars, and being only 18 years old puts him way ahead of the rest.

The first issue of *Judgment Day* will feature a prism enhanced cover. It is sure to be a very eye-catching book, and of course, a top seller.

Get ready for September and "Judge for Yourself!"



Malibu News

Jim Lee on Ultraverse #0

Never-before seen background information about the Ultraverse will be revealed in *Ultraverse #0*, with a special guest cover by Jim (*WildC.A.T.S*) Lee. *Ultraverse #0* is only available to people who save coupons that appear in *Hardcase #1, Prime #1, The Strangers #1, Malibu Sun #26,* and *Wizard #23*. By removing all five coupons and following all the rules listed on the coupon, readers will get one copy of *Ultraverse #0* for every set of coupons sent in.

"*Ultraverse #0* features stories that take place before the events in the launch of the Ultraverse," said Ultra-Editor-In-Chief Chris Ulm. "It's a place where fans can get background they wouldn't otherwise know about."

Malibu Marketing Director Alan Payne said, "It's going to be a very limited edition for those fans who look for something a little special and a little different in comic books." *Ultraverse #0* will be shipped in September to everyone who gets their coupons in by the deadline of the end of August, 1993. "It's a special gift," said Payne, "to those people who are looking for something that not everybody will be able to get."

Characters from the first five Ultraverse books -- *The Strangers, Hardcase, Prime, Freex,* and *Mantra* -- will have separate stories in the comic. Steve Englehart will write *The Strangers*, James Hudnall will write *Hardcase*, Len Strazewski and Gerard Jones will write *Prime*, Jones will write

Freex, and Mike W. Barr will write *Mantra*. "The individual writers are busy enough with the Ultraverse schedule," said Editor Hank Kanalz. "Just one of them wouldn't have the time to do the whole thing on their own. But they know the characters best."

Malibu is putting out *Ultraverse #0* to thank people who have been supportive of the Ultraverse from the beginning. "It's our way of thanking our loyal readers for picking up all of the books," said Kanalz. "It's not just a fluff piece either -- *Ultraverse #0* has information about the characters and their lives before their first issues."

The special cover will feature the Ultraverse characters Mantra and Boneyard. "Jim Lee obviously doesn't have a lot of time on his hands," said Kanalz. "But he did have the time to do this beautiful cover for us." Interior artists include Rick Hoberg, Gene Ha, Art Nichols, and Scott Kolins.

In order to get *Ultraverse #0*, readers must send one complete set of coupons for each copy desired. Only coupons taken directly from the actual comics or magazines will be accepted -- no photocopies or facsimiles of any kind will be honored. The final deadline for submitting coupons is [the end of August, 1993]. Any coupons postmarked after this date will be returned. Checks or money orders in U.S. funds only will be accepted for shipping charges. All copies of *Ultraverse #0* to U.S. residents will be sent via United Parcel Service to allow for the tracing and insurance of lost or damaged packages. UPS will only deliver to street addresses, not P.O. boxes. All copies of *Ultraverse #0* to non-U.S. residents will be sent via U.S. air mail. Coupons should be filled out using a pen or typewriter. "People should follow the directions exactly," said Kanalz. "This is the only way people can get the comic book."

Genesis Crossover For Malibu Titles

Hot on the heels of the Ultraverse, Malibu's biggest comic book crossover will generate enough power to destroy Los Angeles. It's called Genesis and with a colossal new villain, Extreme, the super-hero casts of *Protectors, Dinosaurs For Hire*, and *Ex-Mutants* find themselves bound together in a cosmic catastrophe where their worlds become one in the face of chaos.

"It's a very appropriate new beginning for all of the titles," editor Roland Mann said. "The *Protectors* was born out of the destruction of the city of Brinkston. Now, out of the destruction of Los Angeles, there will rise an expanded *Protectors* universe incorporating both *Ex-Mutants* and *Dinosaurs For Hire*." Mann stressed that the *Protectors* universe has always existed in a world that was slightly different from our own. "These changes are in keeping with that difference."

As if destroying Los Angeles wasn't big enough, Malibu has some of the biggest names in the industry working on the art and story arcs. There will be covers by Kelley Jones, Joe Staton, Jeff Johnson, Chris Wozniak, Darick Robertson, Paul Pelletier and Ken Branch, Curt Swan, Kieron Dwyer, Rich Buckler, Shawn McManus, Dan Jurgens, and Kevin Maguire. Back-up stories will be illustrated by Jeff (Marvel's *Wonderman*) Johnson, Steve (DC's *Deathstroke The Terminator*) Erwin, and Joe (DC's *Green Lantern*) Staton.

Malibu will also be offering a special "chase" comic as an incentive for the Genesis Crossover. *Genesis#0* will feature four compete stories, a *Dinosaurs For Hire*, a *Protectors*, and an *Ex-Mutants* tale along with a story introducing a new character to the *Protectors* universe: WidowMaker. The four stories will be illustrated by industry veterans Jimmy Palmiotti, Curt Swan, Rich Buckler, and one hot young newcomer, Patrick Rolo, who currently pencils the *Ex-Mutants*. George Perez will handle the wraparound Chromium-enhanced cover.

Once the crossover is completed in October, present day *Protectors*, prehistoric *Dinosaurs For Hire* and futuristic *Ex-Mutants* will all exist in one plane of Malibu reality. "Rather than having three separate books exist in three separate worlds, we'll have one cohesive universe where characters and stories can leap from one book to the other and still make sense," Mann said. "It also gives us another distinctive line to offer retailers, fans, and potential licensors."

The action will be spread out over a six part storyline during September and October in *Protectors #13* and *#14*, *Dinosaurs For Hire #8* and *#9*, and *Ex-*

Mutants #11 and *#12*. There will be new characters, new plot twists, new powers, and new creative teams. "Super-hero life as we know it will never be the same," Mann said. The Protectors team will lose old members and gain new ones. The Ex-Mutants will discover supranormal powers they never dreamed were possible. The Dinosaurs will remain just as irascible as ever, only now moreso.

Mann promises to shake-up the casts of all of the books. "There will be some changes in each title. At least one character will leave the universe permanently."

Even more exciting are the new creators. Leonard Kirk will take over the penciling on *Dinosaurs For Hire* and Charles Marshall, who wrote the extremely successful *Planet of the Apes* series will be writing the *Ex-Mutants* issues following the crossover. Glenn Brown will be taking over the penciling on *Man of War* and newcomer Patrick Rolo will take over the art on *Ex-Mutants*.

"The crossover is going to be hot," said Marshall. "Not only is it going to give all the books interesting possibilities, it's a good way to introduce some of the new ideas I'll be working with in *Ex-Mutants*. We are playing with pretty incredible stuff here. It's a study in absolute power."

Despite the changes, Mann said that fans will not be disappointed. "This is something that a lot of our readership has wanted to see since the beginning. The changes will only bring about better stories since all of the titles will be part of a cohesive universe. The story possibilities are limitless."

The first issues of the Genesis Crossover are due to hit stores in September.

Windsor-Smith Joins Ultraverse

Malibu Comics is proud to announce that legendary creator and fan favorite Barry Windsor-Smith has left Valiant and is now bringing his newest project to the Ultraverse. *Rune*, an 11-chapter storyline created and drawn by Windsor-Smith, will appear in the back of each Ultraverse title (in three-page chapters) scheduled for shipping in October.

"This is a fresh start for me in many ways," said the talented writer/artist responsible for some of the look and feel of the current Valiant universe, among many other things. "The Ultraverse is a credible landscape for my kind of story-telling, and I'm really pleased to be a part of it." After its introductory run, *Rune* is then slated to appear as a monthly title sometime in January, 1994.

Sludge Drips Into Ultraverse

Sludge: The name about sums it up.

Urban vigilante. Dweller in the sewers of New York. Walking health hazard.

He used to be Frank Hoag, a cop on the take from the mob, until he defied his gangland boss by refusing to kill another cop. For that belated display of ethics, Hoag was shot to pieces in a pharmaceutical lab and summarily dumped in a sewer. But instead of dying, the chemicals that drenched him in the lab combined with the sewage to give him a new and hideous lease on life – as Sludge.

Sludge is written by Steve (Malibu's *Exiles*, creator of Howard the Duck) Gerber, pencilled by Aaron (Marvel's *Amazing Spider-Man*) Lopresti and inked by Gary (DC's *Doom Patrol*) Martin.

"*Sludge* is probably the darkest title in the entire Ultraverse line," Gerber said. "It takes place on, and beneath, the streets of New York and crosses half-a-dozen different genres, from action-adventure to crime story to horror.

"But the real strength of the stories is their emphasis on the humanity of the characters," he added. "Sludge is more than a vigilante who drips a lot. I'm trying my best to make the readers understand that there's a human being under all that goop and grime."

"Fans today expect a lot from the comics they buy," Lopresti said. "I know that Steve, Gary and I are doing everything we can to make sure that anyone who picks up a copy of *Sludge* will be glad they did."

Sludge #1 has been expanded to 40 pages to add a chapter of Barry Windsor-Smith's and Chris Ulm's *Rune*, which will appear in January as the 13th Ultraverse title. It also features a Barry Windsor-Smith flip cover!

Marvel News

X-Men/Avengers Crossover

It's been almost 30 years since the Avengers and the X-Men first locked horns (way back in *X-Men #9*, cover-dated January, 1965). Since then, both super-teams have grown, but the core of their appeal remains the same: all-out action, colorful characters, abundant *esprit de corps*, and seemingly unstoppable bad guys.

Which, of course, brings us to 1993, and the crowning glory of Marvel's year-long X-Men/Avengers Anniversary Celebration: the X-Men/Avengers Crossover storyline. Entitled "Bloodties," this six-part action epic features a surplus of the aforementioned qualities... and then some. It all begins in *Avengers #368*, which puts the Earth's Mightiest Heroes at loggerheads with the Children of the Atom as civil war explodes in Genosha (Marvel's favorite mutant DMZ). Factor in Fabian Cortez, the kidnapping of Crystal's daughter, and a certain Master of Magnetism, and you've got yourself a no-holds-barred super-hero slugfest in the Mighty Marvel Manner! (It may not be high art, but you just know that it's gonna be as high-spirited as Galactus after snarfing down the planet of Thorazine daiquiris!)

Avengers #368 ships the week of September 21st and retails for $1.25.

Spider-Woman's Back

She's bad, she's mean, she's an Avenger and now she's got her own 4-issue limited series! The Avengers 30th Anniversary continues with one of the most popular members striking out on her own this fall revealing more about Julia Carpenter's origins and exploring the relationship between Julia and her daughter, which may, by the end of the series, change forever!

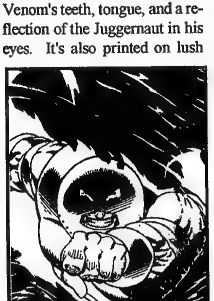
The excitement heats up in the premiere issue. When Julia visits her scientist parents, the Commission man responsible for her powers shows up, mortally ill with the same poisonous swellings she once suffered in a battle against Deathweb! Spider-Woman investigates, leading her to raise questions about her powers. Were they really given to her accidentally, or were the Commission and Deathweb responsible? Unfortunately, Julia has no time to wonder -- hot on her heels is Deathweb, three spider-like villains, out for her blood.

Spider-Woman features longtime *Avengers* scribe Roy Thomas, eagerly writing the story he's wanted to do for a long time! *Spider-Woman* establishes Julia as a major player in *AWC*; this is a more aggressive Spider-Woman than we've ever seen before! Along with Thomas's legendary writing is the *Punisher*'s John Czop's dazzling artwork!

Taking part in the Avengers 30th Anniversary, being a popular character and now being positioned as a major character in the Marvel Universe, *Spider-Woman* is going to be a quick sell out!

Venom's Madness Explored

When Eddie Brock leaves his heart in San Francisco, it's hardly champagne and roses for the symbiote! But that's the least of Eddie's problems in *Venom: The Madness*, a 3-issue limited series that pits him against the Juggernaut, Black Tom Cassidy, and Dusk (from Ann Nocenti's Typhoid Mary story in *Marvel Comics Presents*). *Venom: The Madness* arrives in stores with a beautiful multi-level embossed cover, which features a tight close up of Venom's teeth, tongue, and a reflection of the Juggernaut in his eyes. It's also printed on lush



Fanfare paper!

This saga is written by the very popular Ann (*Daredevil*) Nocenti with artwork by the incomparable Kelley (*Spider-Man 2099, Dark Joker: The Wild, Batman*) Jones. You can expect Jones to infuse *Venom* with a dark, moody feel that will appeal to *Venom* and *Spider-Man 2099* fans. John (*Batman*) Beatty's inks ensure that Kelley's pencils really shine! *Venom* readers will clamor to see the symbiote's reaction when Eddie Brock falls in love, and the non-stop action will also attract fans of hard-hitting adventure. When the symbiote is driven mad(der) by toxic waste, the result is visually and dramatically shattering! Venom is hotter than

ever, thanks to his participation in the unforgettable "Maximum Carnage" crossover, so don't miss out!

Avengers 30th Heats Up

The Avengers 30th Anniversary celebration gets even hotter with the milestone 100th issue of *Avengers West Coast* and its embossed, blazing red foil cover! It's 64 pages of all-out action

against the sinister Mephisto plus two back-up stories featuring Hawkeye and the popular War Machine!

After the AWC find out that it was Mephisto who resurrected history's most evil souls, the Avengers West Coast track him down in his fiery domain. Meanwhile Mephisto is seeking full retribution against Satannish and the AWC! Worlds collide and the Earth will tremble when this book hits the stands! The extra features on Hawkeye and fan-fave War Machine are going to make this one too hot to handle for long!

Scribes Roy Thomas and Len Kaminski and penciller Dave Ross team up for this major event in *Avengers West Coast* history. Not only does this issue wrap up the intense story from issues #98 and 99, but it also leads directly into the season's biggest event, the X-Men/Avengers crossover!

The Avengers 30th Anniversary keeps gaining steam! This is just one of the great books taking part in the celebration and it promises to be one of the most eventful.

Excalibur Becomes Official X-Book

Since *Excalibur #1* first hit the stands way back in 1988, *X-Men* readers and fans have asked the same simple question: Just how the heck does Great Britain's resident band of super mutants fit into "regular" *X-Men* continuity?

The simple answer, of course, is that it doesn't, which probably explains why Mssrs. Claremont, Davis, and Lobdell -- with few exceptions -- have consistently chosen to adopt a more provincial approach to Excalibur's decidedly British misadventures. And for five years, it's worked rather well.

Still, Brian, Meggan, and Rachel are mutants (sort of), and both Kitty and Nightcrawler did once hang their hats in Charlie X's School for Gifted Youngsters. So wouldn't it be nice to see them interact with the rest of comicdom's Merriest Mutants, at least once in a while?

Marvel seems to think so, and they're doing something about it. Beginning with issue #71, *Excalibur* will fall under the editorial umbrella of Bob Harras (who's currently responsible for *The Uncanny X-Men, X-Men, Wolverine,* and *Cable*), thus making it an official *X-Men* continuity book. The first "new direction" issue ships sometime in September.

Mirage News

New Color Titles in October

Eye-popping color! Over-the-top action! Amazing new in-

sights into old characters revealed! All this and much, much more is coming your way this October with the release of three full-color, full-impact comics from Mirage.

You may think you're familiar with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,* but when the series returns after a month's hiatus, it will now be in full color. Black-and-white loyalists need not fear that *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Vol. 2 #1* will lack the special blend of in-depth characterizations and gritty action it has provided. If anything, the new color format will help to vividly illustrate some deeper insights into the lives of the

Turtles and their friends, and bring full-spectrum impact to action and fight sequences.

Don't miss out on *Xenotech #2* by Michael Dooney, and *Stupid Heroes #2* by Peter Laird. Part of the new NEXT imprint at Mirage, the second issue of each of these titles takes readers deeper into the mayhem and mysteries introduced in their first issues. Also, both comics include two bound-in NEXT trading cards, along with a coupon that when collected up with the coupons found in the other NEXT comics, is redeemable towards the final four cards in the NEXT set (available in no other way!).

So gear up for a very cool October and some great comics from Mirage!

Return of Space Usagi

Space Usagi II has had a schedule change. It was listed as having its initial release date for August; however, the first issue of *Space Usagi II* will definitely ship in October, followed by the second and third issue in November and December, respectively.

This second installment of Stan Sakai's Space Usagi trilogy is entitled "White Star Rising," and the storyline takes up where *Space Usagi I* "Death and Honor" left off. *Space Usagi II* will appear in full color, produced in the same high-quality manner as the Mirage-published *Usagi Yojimbo*, and featuring fully-painted covers by Stan Sakai and Tom Luth on all three issues of the mini-series. The third and final installment of this current Space Usagi storyline will conclude sometime in 1994.

In other news, Mirage is happy to announce that Stan Sakai has entered into an agreement with Mirage Studios to launch a worldwide character licensing program based on Space Usagi. Mirage Studios is presently engaged in negotiating a television animation production and distribution deal for the Space Usagi character. Current plans would have the conclusion of a television deal followed up by an agreement with a major toy company to release a Usagi line of characters, with follow-up merchandising, film, video, computer game, additional publishing, and other projects on a worldwide basis. The development of the Space Usagi project is being coordinated by the team of creative, business, and legal talent who has been coordinating the successful TMNT program on behalf of Mirage Studios.

Revolutionary News

Rock's Feisty Females

The ladies take center stage in the *Women in Rock Special #1*, written by Jay Allen Sanford and Richard Hedge with artwork by Joe Paradise and Larry Nadolsky. Opening with bios of pioneering rockers like Janis Joplin and The Runaways, this issue (loaded with lovingly rendered "Good Girl Art") covers the entire gamut of femme fury. Other profiles include Mariah Carey, Paula Abdul, Madonna, and even Janet Jackson (whose sexy new album and film are ultra hot items). Readers have long complained that Revolutionary's music line is male-dominated, so here's the Equal Rights issue!

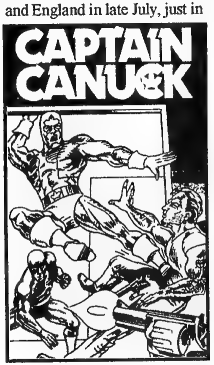
Black Athletes Spotlighted

Revolutionary's comics featuring pioneering black athletes have been used to teach ethnic history in inner city schools for some time. Now, with the upcoming release of *Sports Legends Special #1*, subtitled *Breaking The Color Barrier: Black Athletes In America*, an entire issue has been done dealing with the earliest days of integration in sports, with all the battles and victories, the cheers and the tears. Starring Satchel Paige, Hank Aaron, Jackie Robinson, and many more and featuring a special Arthur Ashe mini-bio.

Semple News

Captain Canuck Picks Up Steam

The Captain is back! 100,000 copies of the prelude edition of Captain Canuck Reborn will go on sale across Canada, the U.S. and England in late July, just in



time to save Canada and the world from a global conspiracy! The 16-page full color prelude (#0) will also be printed in French and distributed in Quebec, Northern Ontario and New Brunswick. Issue #1, in early September, will be the regular 32 pages and will be sold with two versions, regular newsstand and a polybagged gold printed cover version sold with two of four Captain Canuck trading cards. The comic is being printed at Quebecor in Montreal, now the largest comic book printer in the world. Richard Comely, the originator, will write and illustrate this new monthly series with major changes from the original storyline. The only connection to the original series (1975-1981) is that the new hero, Darren Oak, is inspired to have the costume made for him after seeing a copy of that first series. Darren Oak puts it on to conceal his identity while at the same time attracting attention to his message. He must rally the Canadian people against an international conspiracy. His older brother and head of the Oak family empire is deeply involved in the conspiracy. Their plan is to ignite a bloody civil war in order to get the Canadian Government to capitulate to their new world order. This international conspiracy plans to make Canada the headquarters for their global dictatorship. First, they must gain complete control of the Canadian Government.

The series will prescribe to much of the comic book formula. There will be new colorful muscle-bound characters (*Splatter* and *Double Whammy* to start with), lots of action, and a seemingly inconquerable nemesis to defeat. Where the series will differ is in the treatment of violence and the attempt to be more reality based. No one will have superpowers. The metaphors and parallels with real organizations and current world affairs will be more intentional.

Sky Comics News

Sky Has Got The Pros

Lurene Haines. Andy Dimmitt. Tom and Mary Bierbaum. Keith Giffen. Rick McCollum. Daerick Gross. Franchesco. Dell Barras. Don Hillsman. Dave Dorman. Adam Hughes. Twelve names, twelve professionals, each of them working for Sky Comics!

It happens first with Bob Hickey's *Blood and Roses*, shipping in December. This two issue miniseries of ultra-action will not only feature the dynamic pencils of one of comicdom's most appreciated babe artists, Brad Gorby, but will bear fully painted covers by Lurene Haines, who is perhaps best known for her work with Mike Grell on *Green Arrow: The Longbow Hunters* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* from Malibu.

Also in December look for Joe Martin's *Seeker: Vengeance* #2 with a beautifully rendered cover by Andy Dimmitt, whose work has been featured in *Dark Horse Comics* color anthology working with the likes of Chris Warner and in Comico's *Elementals Sex Special* and upcoming *Oblivion* miniseries.

Follow this with one of Sky's most promising prospects, Tom and Mary Bierbaum's *Dead Kid*! The dynamic duo who brought you *Legionnaires* from DC and has completed a successful run scribing *Legion of Superheroes* are now having even more fun with Morty Coyle a.k.a. Dead Kid. The cover to the first issue is illustrated by Keith Giffen, the *Trencher* man himself!

Rick McCollum, best known for his work on Mirage's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* will be debuting his very own creation *Ashley Dust*! Rick is writing and illustrating this story of the marriage of sorcery and technology set in an industrious, metaphysical future.

Painter Daerick Gross, working currently on DC's *Batman: Two Face Strikes Twice*, has painted two covers for the second *Blood & Roses* miniseries. As ever, his paints are beauteously elaborate as he portrays this couple of fierce fighting women ready for anything!

Franchesco, artist of the *Green Lantern Corps Quarterly* annual and Triumphant's *Scavengers*, has lavishly illustrated a leaping, spectral Seeker for her second miniseries entitled *Seeker: Faith & Corruption*. Also signed on for work on this miniseries is Marvel UK's and Hanna Barbera's very own Dell Barras! After completing three issues of *Dark Angel* and the *Death 3* miniseries for Marvel's UK line, Dell contacted Sky Comics because he "wanted to

get on the boat before it left shore!" Good way of putting it!

A later release in '94 from Sky is entitled *Tempered Steele* and will be illustrated by Malibu *Streetfighter's* Don Hillsman! During his stint on *Streetfighter*, Don was also cranking out these highly dynamic pages featuring Sky Comics' resident "goodguy superhero," as publisher Bob Hickey calls him.

Dave Dorman is gearing up to pencil and ink the second cover of Tom and Mary's *Dead Kid* miniseries and Adam Hughes is ready to ply his trade on a *Seeker* cover.

There you have it in a nutshell! Twelve pros all impressed with the quality that Sky Comics has to offer, and if they're impressed, why shouldn't you be? Sky is the company to watch.

Begin collecting with their first color debut in November, Joe Martin's *Seeker: Vengeance*. And then watch out for up and coming mega-hits like Bob Hickey's *Blood & Roses* with covers by Lurene Haines and Daerick Gross, Tom and Mary Bierbaum's *Dead Kid* with covers by Keith Giffen and Dave Dorman, Rick McCollum's *Ashley Dust*, another *Seeker* miniseries by Marvel UK talent Dell Barras, and *Tempered Steele* illustrated by Don Hillsman! It's gonna be a blast! Sky Comics... where lightning strikes again and again!

Starwarp News

In 1989, Starwarp Concepts of Woodside, NY tested the waters of the independent market with the release of *Lorelei Special #1*, a 20-page, digest-sized comic book written and drawn by Queens-based creator Steve Roman. Based on reader response and favorable reviews, Starwarp Concepts went on to schedule *Lorelei* as its first regular series. Debuting at the January 1992 Great Eastern Convention in New York City, *Lorelei #1* was published as a 32-page, digest-sized comic with a full-color cover by horror comics veteran Tom Sutton.

Now, in order to reach a wider audience, Starwarp Concepts is proud to announce the expansion of *Lorelei* to a full-size comic book with completely new stories and a new creative team.

"I'd been planning to go full-size with *Lorelei* for awhile," said Roman, "but I wanted to do it only when I had a story good enough to warrant the upgrade in size. From the amount of mail I'd received on the digest-sized book, everyone was demanding an origin story, so I figured this was the best way to present it."

Although Roman will continue as writer, he will not be drawing the new series. Joining him is artist David C. Matthews, whose credits include Outside Comics' *Maxwell Madd and His Wrestling Women*, as well as his own self-published title, *Satin Steele*.

"I can honestly say that *Lorelei* is David's best work ever," said Roman. "His layouts and the range of emotions he conveys in the characters are some of the best in comics today, and I was lucky to get him for this book. He also has a helluva talent for drawing women."

Covers for *Lorelei* are provided by Louis Small, Jr., whose work as the original pencil artist for Harris Comics' color *Vampirella* series (issues 1, 2, and 4) has garnered high praise and made him a much-sought-after talent. Small has recently completed an issue of *Ms. Mystic* for Continuity Comics and is scheduled to begin an upcoming series with the Brothers Hildebrandt, whose most famous work is the poster art for the first *Star Wars* film, as well as a series written by Roman for Cry For Dawn Productions.

"Louis is probably *Lorelei*'s biggest fan," said Roman. "When he agreed to be the cover artist, I went nuts. If people were impressed with his *Vampirella* art, they haven't seen the full extent of his abilities. His *Lorelei* covers prove that he's as talented an inker as he is a penciller. In fact, we've turned his first cover into a full-color poster." The signed and numbered poster -- limited to 300 copies -- will be available exclusively from Capital City Distributors in November.

Topps News

Zorro The Vampire-Slayer?

Topps Comics presents Zorro as he's never been seen before. In a unique plot twist, *Dracula Vs. Zorro* -- shipping in October -- pits Johnston McCulley's world-

renowned, classic hero against Bram Stoker's villainous Count Dracula.

Set against the turbulent backdrop of Napoleonic Europe, this two-issue crossover series is an "epic drama filled with gothic terror, erotic tension, horrifying suspense and relentless action," said Editor-In-Chief Jim Salicrup. To bring this adventure to life, Topps has recruited writer Don McGregor, Penciller Tom Yeates and inker Rick Magyar.

This comic book series marks a whole new era for the Zorro property. Topps' ambitious, long-term comics program coincides with a mega merchandising campaign already underway. Currently, "The New Zorro" can be seen on The Family Channel. Television animation is coming, a major toy line is in the works and as many as 35 companies are now on board to manufacture a full range of licensed products. Plus, the excitement continues... the summer of 1994 will see a live action Zorro film produced by Steven Spielberg.

Unlike previous Zorro comics, Topps is exploring an exciting new dimension, creating never-before-seen characters in a slicker, more intense environment better suited for today's audience. "This is a much sexier, more dynamic Zorro," said McGregor. "He will have a whole new set of recurring characters in addition to the traditional supporting cast."

Some of these exciting characters will debut in the follow-up Zorro series (set for January). Included are Moonstalker, a non-traditional Indian who, using his skills as a trained blacksmith, becomes a formidable foe for Zorro, and Lady Rawhide -- Zorro's Catwoman -- by day the daughter of a wealthy landowner, but by night a fierce, bullwhip carrying villainess who blames Zorro for her brother's blindness. There is also Lucien Machete, the last of the conquistadors. Machete is a brutal giant who can screw a fantastic array of wicked weaponry into the burned, ruined stump of his right wrist. He uses these deadly blades in lethal fashion against the man he blames for the loss of his hand -- his mortal enemy, Zorro.

All of the stories will be as historically accurate as possible, while maintaining the spirit and soul of the Zorro character. "Zorro is the epitome of independence," said McGregor. "He encourages people to stand up and fight for what they believe. That makes him a hero for all time and a character with the right ingredients to appeal to contemporary comics fans."

Dracula Vs. Zorro begins with Don Diego -- Zorro -- embarking on a secret mission to Toledo, Spain, a place seeped in legends of satanic sorcery, where a swordmaker said to be a master of the black arts forged the incomparable sword Zorro now carries. At a Spanish port, Diego meets the beautiful Carmelita Rodriguez, the catalyst for this horrifying clash. In the aftermath of personal tragedy and searching for a new reason to live, she leaves her native Spain to visit other countries and is charmed by Diego, a dashing caballero from Spanish California. While on the boat to France, they meet Count Dracula.

Don McGregor's gripping *Killraven* and Black Panther stories for Marvel during the 1970s earned him immediate fan acclaim, which was further enhanced with the graphic novels *Sabre* and *Detectives, Inc.*

Artist Tom Yeates is best known for the Epic Comics series *Time Spirits* and two *Dragonlance* graphic novels for TSR, which he wrote and drew. In *Dracula Vs. Zorro*, Yeates captures the drama and atmosphere of a time when all of Europe was in a bloody upheaval.

Inker Rick Magyar gained popularity for his work on *The Question* for DC Comics. Some of his other work includes *Hawkman* for DC, *Alien 3* for Dark Horse and *Maze Agency*.

"Based on Zorro's increasing popularity and our dynamic concepts and creators, we believe the time is right to bring this character back," said Topps Comics Publisher Ira Friedman. "*Dracula Vs. Zorro* is a fun and exciting way to kick off what is certain to be a long and prosperous publishing program."

Golden To Pencil Raptor Series

Velociraptor: Not since Jim Cameron's *Aliens* has the silver screen played host to a more vicious breed of inhuman killers. In fact, Michael Crichton's predatory Raptors (as imagined by Stan Winston and Steven Spielberg), may indeed represent the most formidable movie monster ever -- swift as birds, intelligent as monkeys, deadly as dragons, and, when it's all said and done, just plain mean as hell!

Naturally, they're also quite popular, especially with the comic book crowd, meaning that the final issue of Topps' *Jurassic Park* is far from the last. Beginning this September, *Jurassic Park* continues with *Raptors #1* ($2.95), wherein the titular saurians rampage across the Costa Rican mainland. This full-color, two-part spin-off series features a story by Steve Englehart, and is spectacularly rendered by Michael (*Micronauts*) Golden and Armando Gil.

Industry News

Capital City Keeping Busy

Capital City Distribution, Inc. has announced a marketing agreement with Germany's Modern Graphics Kunsthandel GMBH. On May 7, 1993, Modern Graphics began promoting and distributing Capital City products throughout Germany. The company has distributed comics and other entertainment products for four years and today has 90 active customers. The company is headquartered in the city of Rastatt and has a warehouse in Cologne.

"This agreement is a sign of success for Capital City's commitment to international growth," said Dennis Keinheinz, Capital City vice president and controller. "We believe that Capital City's product knowledge and transportation efficiencies, combined with Modern's local presence, will benefit retailers of all sizes within the German market." Capital City currently is exploring additional international distribution agreements.

Moreover, as part of Capital City's ongoing dedication to customer service, the company will offer a new, free ordering system. Capital Connection, a personal computer-based ordering program which retailers can install on their own PC systems, will be available August, 1993. Users will be able to search for products, print reports, and calculate retail and wholesale totals. Retailers can then send their orders directly to Capital City by diskette or through the company's 24-hour, on-line Bulletin Board System.

"In the comic book business, timeliness and efficiency are of the essence," said Connie Woolpert Koury, vice president of sales and marketing. "The Capital Connection will help retailers stay on top of their business in a growing and changing market." Retailers interested in receiving more information should watch for solicitations in the August Orderpak.

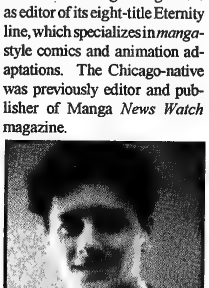
Also, Capital City and Milwaukee Public Schools' Auer Avenue Elementary have formed a partnership to promote literacy and reading during the 1993/94 school year. "Our business is dependent upon people's ability to appreciate the written word, so it's in our best interest to take a role in supporting literacy programs," said Connie Woolpert Koury. "Beyond that, however, it's in the community's best interest to have citizens who can read and are able to make informed decisions."

Capital City will provide Auer with comic books as reading materials -- and as incentives to read. In addition, two hours will be reserved each school day for reading and language arts instruction. "We're trying to get kids to love reading for the sake of reading, not because they're being told they have to," said George Kazel, Auer's vice principal. "If comic books can make reading fun while providing life-enriching stories and lessons, they could be a terrific tool for us."

In addition to contributing comic books and other reading materials, Capital City will donate the time of several employees to conduct reading, writing, and publishing workshops for the children. Koury indicated that Capital City intends to expand its support of literacy programs beyond Milwaukee.

Eternity Acquires New Editor

Mark Paniccia has joined Malibu Comics' growing forces as editor of its eight-title Eternity line, which specializes in *manga*-style comics and animation adaptations. The Chicago-native was previously editor and publisher of Manga *News Watch* magazine.



Editor-in-Chief Chris Ulm said he is happy to have Paniccia on board. "Someone with his past experience with the *manga* market is going to be a real asset to the company," he said.

On the job since May, Paniccia said he has many plans for the Eternity line, one of which -- a new Eternity logo -- has already been accomplished.

"My ambition is to expand and strengthen the Eternity line by bringing in Japanese *manga* translations. I also have some exciting licensed projects in the works," he said.

Paniccia has been involved in publishing for seven years and is also known for his work in vampire-related comics and projects. He said he is enjoying his most recent move.

"I am happy to be here because it's such a great company to work for. The people are so cool; they are easy to work with. There's a family atmosphere here, and it makes coming into the office a pleasure," he said.

Asked what he does in his spare time, Paniccia responded: "Work."

Then he added: "As soon as I get a break in my schedule, I'm taking up surfing. I might as well -- now that I'm in California."

The 29-year-old attended college at Holy Cross College in South Bend, Ind., studying theology, philosophy, sculpture, and accounting. He later dumped accounting for writing, a decision he has not regretted.

Rambo Does Dredd

The verdict is in: Sylvester (*Rocky, Rambo, Cliffhanger*) Stallone will be toting the badge, helmet, and bad attitude of legendary Mega-City One lawman Judge Dredd when Disney's Hollywood Pictures division begins filming the adventures of the UK's most popular comic hero in February 1994.

The film -- to be produced by Edward R. Pressman Film Corp., Cinergi, Inc., and Creative Movie Marketing -- will be scripted by William (*Terminator 2*) Wisher; a director has yet to be announced.

Cartoon Art Exhibit At Comicfest

The International Museum of Comic Art -- home of more than 100,000 original drawings, 10,000 books, and hundreds of hours of animated film and video -- will be exhibiting at Comicfest '93 in October.

Founded by *Beetle Bailey* creator Mort Walker, the Museum is dedicated to collecting, displaying, and interpreting some of the most important works of cartoon art. "I appreciate the effort Comicfest is making to include cartoon art and other areas related to comic books," Walker said. "We all have a great deal to offer."

Diamond Looks Out For Retailers, More

In response to customer requests, Diamond is currently researching the possibility of endorsing a business insurance policy specifically tailored to the needs of comics retailers.

Consolidated Insurance Center, Inc. -- an insurance broker which has handled Diamond's business insurance needs since 1982 -- is working with Diamond to develop an insurance package that will appeal to the largest possible number of retailers, thereby reducing premiums for all participants.

According to Rick Buck, Consolidated's Senior Vice-President, he and Consolidated agent Mick Kohlenstein learned firsthand about the idiosyncrasies of comic book specialty shops from retailers who stopped by the company's booth during the Diamond Seminar in Atlanta. The feedback from those retailers -- combined with questions posed in July's "Info Please" Poll and a survey conducted at the Seminar -- will be used to design the most beneficial, flexible, and economical insurance package possible.

Among the types of policies being considered for inclusion in the Consolidated plan: worker's compensation, property and liability, automobile, group disability, and group life.

"We are encouraging those retailers who picked up a survey at the Consolidated booth to return it as soon as possible," said Diamond's Director of Marketing, Roger Fletcher, "and to make their opinions known in this month's 'Info Please' poll. Their input will ultimately determine the shape of any business insurance Diamond may endorse in the future."

In other news, Diamond has recently made a donation to the Johns Hopkins Children's Center, which cares for patients, teaches physicians specializing in pediatrics, and supports research that studies the genetic and environmental causes for disease.

In gratitude for their donations, all contributors -- including Diamond's own Joltin' Geppi -- got a chance to realize a Balti-

more Orioles fan's dream and take batting practice against legendary pitcher Tippy Martinez at Oriole Park at Camden Yards.

"All of [our] endeavors require capital which cannot be raised from patient-generated revenues," said Dr. Frank A. Oski, Chairman & Physician-in-Chief of the Center. "[The] very generous gift from Diamond Comic Distributors to participate in the Home Run Fantasy will help us continue our search for new and better ways to attain our goals.

"Many children will benefit from the thoughtfulness of this donation. Please accept our gratitude for this gift."

Batman Gets 3-Year Extension

DC Comics has announced that the Fox Children's Network and Warner Bros. have reached a three-year agreement that extends the run of the Emmy Award-winning *Batman: The Animated Series* on Fox Children's Network through the 1996-1997 season!

Warner Bros. Animation has made a multi-million dollar commitment to produce new episodes of the hit series.

Margaret Loesch, President of the Fox Children's Network, said, "Fox Children's Network is very excited about extending the highly successful run of *Batman: The Animated Series*. With Warner's commitment to quality production and FCN's dominance in the marketplace, we are confident that Batman will continue to be a winner."

Giordano Announces Retirement

Dick Giordano, long a cornerstone of the comics industry, has announced his retirement from his position as Vice President-Editorial Director of DC Comics. DC hastens to add that his retirement from day-to-day duties will not "spell the end of his 25-year association with DC." Giordano has entered a new long-term agreement with DC to provide exclusive editorial and consulting services.

Giordano has said that he wants to return to "the life that provided me the knowledge, experience and reputation that made sitting on the business side possible: the life of a freelancer."

Giordano's comics career included apprenticing in Jerry Iger's studio, freelancing for Charlton Comics, working with Neal Adams in forming Continuity Associates, and his long career as both an editor and award-winning artist at DC Comics. (His newest artwork can be seen in the new *Catwoman* and *Modesty Blaise* series from DC.)

Jeanette Kahn, President and Editor-In-Chief of DC, said, "Dick has been a treasured part of our family at DC for a long time now. We don't want to see him go, especially after all he's been doing for DC, not only as an editor and artist, but as our goodwill ambassador to the freelancer community. But this change is of extreme personal importance to Dick and we want to support something that matters so very much to him."

Paul Levitz, Executive Vice-President and Publisher of DC, went on to comment that "since Dick is irreplaceable, we won't try to replace him. His work as an editor and as a leader of our editorial marked Dick as one of the great editorial champions of creativity and experimentation in our field, and we will do our best to continue those traditions. We have an extraordinary team of talented editors, and we are confident that they will continue to make DC an environment for writers and artists' best creative efforts."

David and Goliath in Modern Times

"Goliath" Marvel has filed a lawsuit against Defiant "David," in an eleventh hour attempt to stop the fast start of a new comic rival. A lawsuit charging trademark infringement was filed August 3 in United States District Court, Southern District in Manhattan by Marvel Comics Limited, part of the Marvel entertainment empire, against Defiant, the six-month-old start-up comic brainchild of Jim Shooter, the former editor-in-chief of Marvel. Shooter, 41, last locked horns with Marvel's current chairman, Ronald Perelman, in 1988 when both Shooter and Perelman were suitors for the company. Today's lawsuit seeks a preliminary injunction on an expedited basis, which could result in a judge's decision within two weeks.

Marvel's suit maintains that the name *Warriors of Plasm* infringes on its alleged trademark rights, first claimed in the United Kingdom for a character, Plasmer.

The comic book series which features the character has not appeared and is not expected to appear in this country until late September. In June, Defiant responded to Marvel's concerns by changing the name of its series from *Plasm* to *Warriors of Plasm*, as part of what Shooter termed at the time a "gentlemanly resolution" of the issue.

The suit comes just as the first

issue of Defiant's first comic, *Warriors of Plasm #1*, arrives in comic book stores throughout the country. The first offering from Shooter's new company, *Warriors of Plasm #1* has captured approximately two percent of the market. Marvel claims its sales routinely account for about 50 percent of the comic book market.

"It is difficult to conceive how Marvel believes that our trademarked title, named for the world Plasm, or the trademark *Warriors of Plasm*, infringes on a U.K. character called Plasmer, hero of a book which has yet to published," says Shooter. "It is easier to believe that they are simply concerned about our fast take-off in a market they dominate. They are aggressive competitors and turf warriors and this type of 'spoiler' behavior right at the beginning of our launch is a classic Marvel technique. We intend to fight this in both the courts of law and public opinion."

X-Men Video Game on Genesis

The most popular comic book superhero team of all-time and stars of the hit Saturday morning animated series, Marvel Comic's X-Men, is now available on Sega Genesis with an action-packed storyline, energy-charged gameplay and an authentic Marvel Comics look.

"Recreating the X-Men action and excitement on the Genesis was a natural," said Diane Fornasier, Sega director of Genesis. "The Genesis is the ultimate 'fighting machine' for showing off the fast-paced combat and clever moves the Marvel X-Men need to defend justice."

Sega's video game, appropriately titled "X-Men," is the ultimate in video gaming muscle power for players who enjoy utilizing mutant forces and solving riddles to combat disaster. Gamers travel through seven explosive levels of gameplay while battling ruthless tribes in the Savage Land and plunging to the edge of insanity in the haunted castle of Excalibur's Lighthouse.

The Marvel X-Men front line of mutant heroes includes the team-leader Cyclops; the ferocious Wolverine; the crafty Gambit, and the quick-thinking Nightcrawler. Together, these amazing X-Men match their extraordinary abilities against the evil mutant, Magneto, who has devised the world's deadliest computer virus. The X-Men must battle Magneto and his trained henchmen before the main computer in the X-Men's Danger Room falls victim to Magneto's evil virus.

A colorful X-Men poster, with a computerized "strategy map" on the back, is included with the purchase of each "X-Men" cartridge. "X-Men" is available for Genesis at a suggested retail price of $54.99.

SCOTT'S Blazing TOP TEN

Top Ten Reasons Bill Clinton Doesn't Read Comics

10. *Swamp Thing* gives him nightmares.

9. Tipper told him not to.

8. Alisn't always around to read to him.

7. Rush Limbaugh would make fun of him.

6. Hillary told him not to.

5. Comics aren't afraid to tackle the issues.

4. His secret plan to drop *Punisher War Zone* comics into Sarajevo backfired.

3. Super-heroes tell the truth.

2. Wolverine has a higher approval rating.

1. Got sick of reading Dan Quayle's old *Cherry's Jubilee* comics.

COMICS NOW

by Jerry Smith

There are a number of superb books on the market I haven't made it around to recommending yet, and *X-O Manowar* is definitely one of them. *X-O Manowar*, from Valiant, is, as my friend Dwayne put it one day as he was praising the book, "Conan in a can."

This isn't a deragatory remark. *X-O* is about Aric Dacia, a 5th Century Visigoth (yeah, the guys who sacked Rome) who was kidnapped by Valiant's Spider-aliens and put to work in the usual outer space slave pens. Thanks to Einstein's Theory (hey, it really does work), when the aliens again visit Earth, it's 1991. In their ship, on his way to being executed, Aric escapes with the aliens' experimental X-O body armor. The armor is a magnificent weapon. It can communicate with its wearer, form itself to its wearer's body shape, and fire lots of nasty weapons. Trouble is, Aric is a simple barbarian used to fists and swords. He has no idea what the armor is, or that he's been gone 2000 years and the world isn't the same as it was in 400 A.D. He has a lot of learning to do.

That was twenty issues ago. Aric grew up fast, and quickly learned that maybe things hadn't changed so much. The armor has made him a fierce warrior, and allowed him to obtain his own company--Orb Industries. He's made numerous friends--and enemies, who want the armor for themselves. In *X-O Manowar* #20, Aric fights the U.S. government for possession of the armor, and, through some slick maneuvering worthy of Bill Clinton himself, he wins the battle. However, the victory makes him so disgusted with modern culture he turns the armor over to his security advisor, a black woman named Randy.

It looks like the fun is just starting in this book. I'm sure Aric will reclaim the armor eventually, but seeing how Randy, a fully developed character in her own right, handles the world's most powerful weapon, is a sight I'm looking forward to.

Much recommended is *X-O Manowar* #0, which, in addition to *X-O* #1 (both written by Bob Layton), tells the story of Aric's capture and escape, and *X-O Manowar*, the regular series, written by Jorge Gonzalez and drawn by Paris T. Karounos. This is probably Valiant's best title. It's much better than Iron Man. It's "Conan in a can."

From DC comes *Catwoman* #1, a most underwhelming comic. Writer Jo Duffy has done several good things with the character, like giving her long hair again, replacing the movies' leather bondage costume with an even better purple and black number, and distancing her from Frank Miller's prostitution/street trash origin. Unfortunately, Duffy has taken a little too much out of the character. In this first issue, there's nothing to make us like or hate Catwoman. We don't root for her to steal those jewels from the museum or to get caught. She's just another "cat" burglar. So what? She lets *Batman* villain Bane walk all over her, then is stupid enough to let his henchmen find out where she lives so he can blow up her apartment. She used to be too mean, now she's too nice. I hope Duffy can find a happy medium before this book hits the "Bland Hall of Fame." The art, by Jim Balent, is excellent.

I don't read many Vertigo books, the "mature" imprint of DC (A line of books for mature readers and I don't read most of them. Hmmmmm ...). I appreciate the fact that they're trying to do something different, just not how they're doing it. I can say that *Hellblazer* and *Sandman*, both from Vertigo, are two of the finest comics published and reason enough for Vertigo's existence. They're certainly reason enough to buy *Vertigo Jam* #1, featuring most of the characters from Vertigo's unrelated universe in an anthology of short stories. As with any anthology, there are

ups and downs in this comic. The *Sandman* story, like all of Neil Gaiman's writing, is a magical experience. These stories will be remembered as one of the benchmarks of comics history. The *Hellblazer* story, by Garth Ennis, is one of the nastiest magic stories I've ever read. It's one of the nastiest stories I've ever heard of, period. And I watch *A Current Affair*. I'll have to do a full review of *Hellblazer*, the regular title, soon. This story only adds to my high opinion of the book. It's probably my favorite title right now.

There are other stories in the *Vertigo Jam*, but I couldn't care less about *Animal Man*, *Doom Patrol*, *Swamp Thing*, *Kid Eternity*, or *Shade, the Changing Man*. I've tried them all, disliked them, and these stories didn't change my mind. Not that they're all bad, they're just not my cup of tea. You might feel differently.

I honestly don't want to spend this column trashing Vertigo titles, but I have to say something about Matt Wagner's *Sandman Mystery Theatre*. A huge fan of Wagner's work, I couldn't wait for this series to begin, only to find it a massive disappointment. So far this book has served as an excuse for one sick, violent act after another. In the first storyline, a KKK-type villain kidnaps women and tortures them to death. For some reason, Wagner thought readers couldn't get the idea that the villain was evil without showing mutilated corpses, severed hands, and women being tied up and tortured with red-hot pokers. In the second storyline, a man kills prostitutes by cutting their heads off with a knife. This time Wagner figures we have enough imagination to picture this without showing it in graphic detail.

Sandman Mystery Theatre's "hero," Wesley Dodds, is a 1930s eccentric with money, inspired by his dreams to build a gas gun and fight crime. He has the personality of lightly browned toast, and his character exists only as a framework for the book's twisted villains to do their work. Matt Wagner said that this book would be about "hate crimes." Fine, but isn't there supposed to be something entertaining about a comic book story? Anything? This book is about violent act after violent act, with no reason for its existence. If Wagner is trying to say something about the condition of life, I don't agree. Life is more than violence, death, and hopelessness. I think its pretty good.

Sandman Mystery Theatre is a microcosm of what is wrong with most of the Vertigo books--in trying to be different, to see how far they can go to sicken and disgust their audience, and to be "mature," the writers and editors have forgotten that comics should be entertaining too.

It's great to see Chris Claremont back with *Aliens/Predator: The Deadliest of the Species*. Just when you thought nothing more could be done with the tired Aliens/Predator mythos, Claremont proves, as he usually does, that the story is not all-told.

Deadliest of the Species deals with Earth of the near future. The planet has just been cleared of an earlier Alien infestation, and the surface is not yet totally safe. Caryn Delacroix, the "trophy wife" of Delacroix Industries CEO Lucien Delacroix, is being pursued in her dreams by a Predator, a being she knows only as an invisible, but tangible, force. She changes her appearance, only to be tracked by the mysterious being in real life. For reasons known only to the Predator, he ends up kidnapping Caryn at the end of the story.

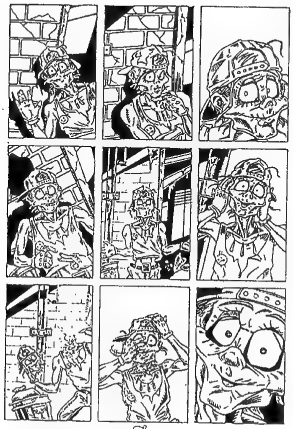
Claremont is dead set on making this twelve issue series much more than two protagonists tearing the crud out of each other. His human characters are obviously going to be just as important and interesting as his aliens. Caryn Delacroix, after one issue, is already more three-dimensional than most characters that have existed for years.

Jackson Guice is the perfect penciller for this series. His women are strong and beautiful, his Predators and Aliens are ... well, we really haven't seen them yet, but who cares? Guice's dynamic style lends itself to whatever he wants to draw. The only possible complaint about this book could be its frequency. According to the first issue, it will be bi-monthly. At the twelve-issue length, that's two full years to tell this story. As the plot progresses, hopefully it can be pushed up to a more frequent schedule.

PREVIEW

DEAD KID

by Tom and Mary Bierbaum, Joe Corroney and Bill Nichols
Published by Sky Comics



NOVEMBER 1993 FROM DARK HORSE COMICS:

NOT A TURKEY IN THE BUNCH!

FRANK MILLER

RICARDO DELGADO

ANDREW VACHSS

DAVE GIBBONS
MIKE MIGNOLA
KEVIN NOWLAN

STAN SHAW

DAN JOLLEY
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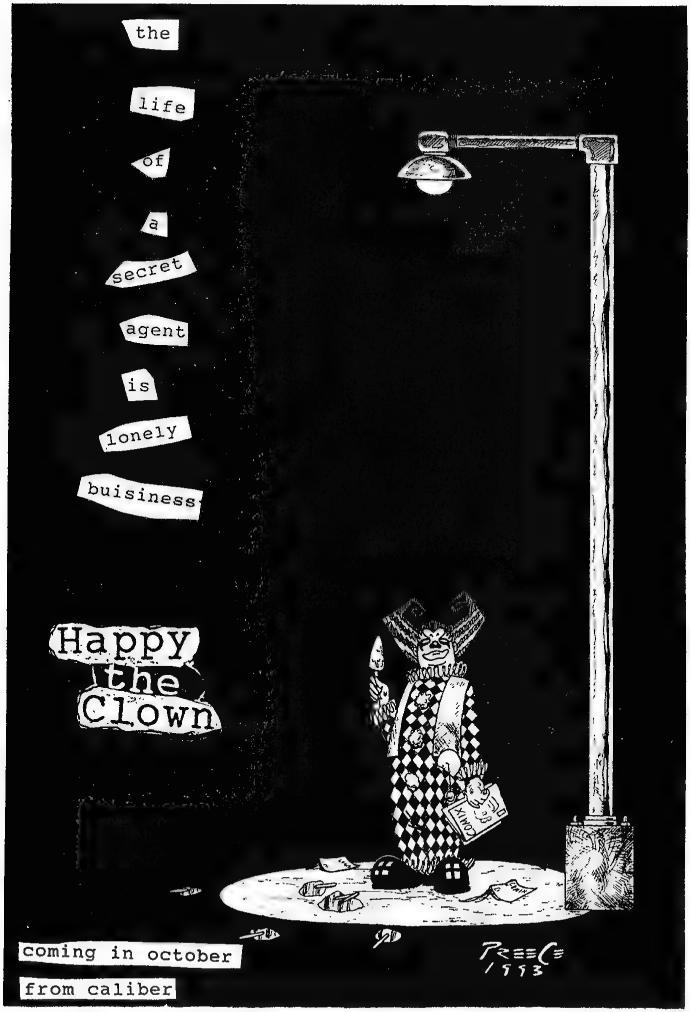
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buisiness
Happy
the
Clown
coming in october
from caliber
REESE
1993

A Conversation With...

Rick Leonardi

by Tony Manifold

Up until recently, whenever one of the major companies released a sub-universe, it never really did very well. Marvel's New Universe flopped, as did DC's Impact line. That's why, late last year, when Marvel released its 2099 line, the announcement sent shock waves through the industry. The reason was, of course, because the titles all sold so well. All four of the titles: *Spider-Man 2099*, *Ravage 2099*, *Doom 2099*, and *Punisher 2099*, made it to Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc.'s "Top 10" shipping list for their respective premiere months, and one of the titles, *Spider-Man 2099*, actually reached the Number One position when it was released in September 1992, defeating even Valiant's *H.A.R.D. Corps #1*, Image's *Supreme #1* and Marvel's own *Uncanny X-Men #294* (the beginning of the "X-cutioners' Song" crossover)! One of the many things that Marvel did the right way was to hire some of the best creators available, including Peter David, Stan "the Man" Lee, Tom Morgan, John Francis Moore and, of course, Rick Leonardi. Recently, *Arena Magazine* had a chance to talk with Leonardi, the penciller for *Spider-Man 2099*, at a convention in Indianapolis. The conversation was over that title and other hot projects, past and future.

Tony Manifold: *Do you have any upcoming hot projects outside of Spider-Man 2099?*

Rick Leonardi: It's a little hard to say. There are two issues of a three-part Batman series that I think are going to run some time in the regular *Detective* continuity, but, for various reasons, I'm not able to do the third issue. I think they're going to get Klaus Janson, the inker on those two issues, to pencil and ink that third issue, but whether he's going to get that out in 1993 or not I can't say.

At the same time, there's 53-pages of a Kitty, Rachel and Wolverine graphic novel. It's sort of an *Excalibur*, but more of a Kitty/Wolverine story. Those 53 pages are done, they've been done for a couple of years. All they're waiting for now is an ending to be written, and that will probably be another 20 or 30 pages. We have to get that out of Chris Claremont, and he's a pretty busy boy. It's extremely long term. I'm not even promising that it will be done, but there's 53 pages sitting around doing nothing at this point.

TM: *Do you know what kinds of things are going to be happening on Spider-Man 2099?*

RL: From issue #4 to issue #8 or 9, he's basically being chased around the city; he hasn't had a chance to catch his breath. I think with issue #10 we'll bring him back to the apartment, and we'll start to catch up on some of the details of who he is, what his family looks like, and what he actually thinks of being made into a superhero. He hasn't even had a chance to assess his powers, to be perfectly frank. I think we'll have to have one of those little sequences where he goes up to the rooftop and discovers, "Wow! I can shoot **this** kind of web if I hold my arms like this!" We'll have a taking stock sort of issue, and I think that'll probably be issue #10, if Peter (David) can be believed. He's sort of taking his time with plot, and I think it was really a risky thing that he did, stretching out the plot over three issues. I mean, if you think about it, it's really unusual to see an origin issue, or a #1 issue anyway, where the superhero doesn't actually show up in costume except in flashback, or flash-forward, as the case may be. So, that was going out on a limb, but that's the kind of writer he is. He's not afraid to take chances. And I think he gets away with it. I don't think it hurt the sales of the first book. I think it actually got sales to follow through on issues #2 and 3.

TM: *Up until now, you've been mostly a "fill-in artist", doing one or two-part stories for titles such as Spider-Man, The Uncanny X-Men, Dark Horse Comics, and so on. This is your first chance to work on something regularly. How did you come to this decision?*

RL: I've kind of decided that the way to go is to be like

a utility baseball player. I like switching around to different titles and filling in where the regular guys are getting behind. You get more variety that way, and you get to work with different people, and that had a lot of attraction to me. The industry is really geared toward people going on to regular work. They encourage that, and the incentives are all geared towards making that kind of commitment. So, this project seemed like the right thing to try and see how it works out.

TM: On Spider-Man 2099, you're creating not just your own character but your own universe and timeline. Do you find this easier or harder or better or worse than working on a character who has been around for a while and has 50-some-odd years of history and a built-in supporting cast, and all you have to do is create a new villain or girlfriend every now and then?

RL: Well, in some respects it's kind of fun, because the sky is really the limit, so long as you stay within the bounds that you're working with. I mean, you're working with three other teams, so you can't suddenly introduce something that the other teams have explicitly ruled out. We've spent a lot of time, for example, creating vehicles that work on the principle of high-speed turbines or on magnetic levitation. If somebody just popped up one day and said, "No, this is an anti-gravity car, and everybody has one." Wait a second, we spent a lot of time inventing cars that work on the principle of high-speed turbines. You can't just say, "And now we have anti-gravity technology." You're working with that kind of limitation, but that's not necessarily a restriction, just a fun thing to keep in mind, a thing you can try and get around sometimes.

TM: Are there any major characters that you'd really like to do that you haven't had a chance to do yet?

RL: Well, there was that *Batman* project. *Batman* was the one thing that I really wanted to work on that I hadn't really had an opportunity to do. Beyond that, there's some projects that I wanted to work on in the past but the opportunity just slipped by. We were pushing for a while to get Colossus in a graphic novel or a mini-series, right about the time that Gorbachev was in power, and everything was up in the air back then. The opportunity to tell the type of story that we wanted to tell has passed.

TM: Speaking of which, there was that "Colossus" story starting in Marvel Comics Presents #10.

RL: Oh, yeah. That was an interesting story. That was supposed to be about the man in the middle, between two cultures. Peter was a really interesting character because he was standing between two cultures and acting as a lens for the one to look at the other and in reverse. He was a Russian in America, but he knew enough about America that he could interpret America to the Russians and, in turn, interpret Russia to the Americans. I thought that this was a chance to do an interesting story. It turned into this weird CIA paranoid dream, but you can't always get what you want.

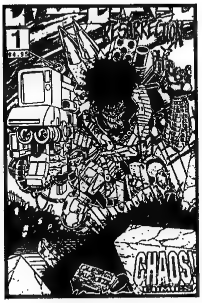
SEE NO EVIL?

WE DO.

And you can, too, with a full-fledged, no holds barred *Evil Ernie* giveaway right here! If you like Evil, you'll love this. To enter, simply send us a postcard with your name, age and address to: Autograph Giveaway #4, 264 Main Street, Florence, KY 41042. We'll pick winners by random and here's what you can win!

1ST PRIZE: The first picked winner will receive a GOLD FOIL logo edition of *EVIL ERNIE* #1 signed by Brian Pulido, Steven Hughes, Jimmy Palmiotti, Mark Morales and Joel Thomas! Whew!

CHAOS! COMICS



2ND PRIZE: The second picked winner will receive a signed ASHCAN of *EVIL ERNIE* #1 autographed by the crew mentioned above with the exception of Joel!

3RD PRIZE: The third picked winner will receive a regular edition of *EVIL ERNIE* #1 with the SILVER foil logo autographed by creators, Brian Pulido and Steven Hughes!

DEADLINE: Oct. 29, 1993!

30 YEARS OF MISUNDERSTOOD MUTANTS

A Close Look at the Beginnings of the First Post-Nuclear Family

by Robert J. Sodaro

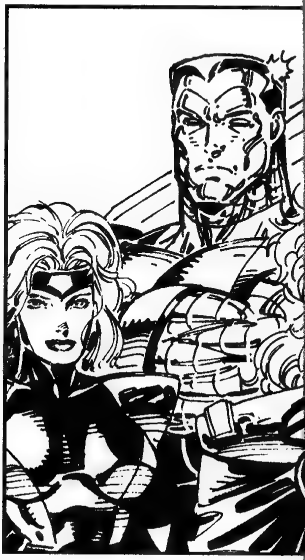
In the music industry, when a record (or – for you younger readers – a CD) ships big, it is said to ship gold or platinum. Well, for years the various X-Men titles have been doing just that – shipping gold and platinum (with the super-hot adjectiveless *X-Men* being so hot it shipped uranium). Still, it hasn't always been this way. Back in the early days of the title, the book was sort of a cross between the family-like Fantastic Four and the group-of-strangers-thrown-together-by-fate Avengers. Given today's popularity, it's no wonder that many fans may not be aware that at one point in the X-Men's career, their book was actually shipping cement, and was in fact canceled for a short time, returning as a reprint book, which it stayed for five years.

Considering that if the eight core titles of the X-Family were spun off from Marvel to form a new comic company, it would probably be the second- or third-largest comic book company in the world. Not bad for a group of misfits that began life as a group of second-stringers 30 years ago. What with all the hoopla going on to celebrate the X-Men's thirtieth anniversary, this is as good a time as any to look back on some of the early highlights of their illustrious careers, and examine the phenomena of Marvel's merry mutants.

The X-Men first hit the stands towards the end of 1963 (the word "Uncanny" wasn't added to the cover copy until issue #114 and didn't become part of the indicia copy until #142). As is well-known, the original line-up consisted of Cyclops (as deputy leader), Iceman, the Beast, Angel, and Marvel Girl, with Professor X as their mentor. This group of teenaged mutants were gathered together by the professor to hone their abilities, protect them from the growing anti-mutant faction of Homo Sapiens, and combat any evil mutants that arrived on the scene. Needless to say, the first issue, in addition to introducing the young X-Men, also introduced us to their greatest foeman – Magneto.

The initial issues of the X-Men were written by Stan Lee and penciled by Jack Kirby, giving the book an FF-like feel. After a mere 17 issues, Jack left the series to be replaced by Jay Gavin (who had been inking Kirby since issue #13), while Stan himself lasted only another two issues before being replaced by Roy Thomas, as Stan slid into the editorial chair. As can be expected, these changes in creative personal altered the direction of the book. Still, the tone of Stan and Jack's work has influenced the book throughout the years.

It was also during those first few issues that many of today's characters and villains originated. The Blob first appeared in issue #3, Magneto returned in issue #4 with the first incarnation of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants (Toad, Mastermind, and Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch); Unis the Untouchable, who for a long time was a compatriot Blob, came to our attention in issue #8; the enigmatic Stranger appeared in issue #11; Professor X's step-



brother, Cain Marko, a.k.a. the Juggernaut rampaged through in issues #12 and #13; and the Sentinels introduced their own version of the "ultimate solution" in #15-17.

A number of significant crossovers also occurred in those early issues. Issue #6 revealed that the Sub-Mariner is also a mutant (the off-spring of land- and sea-dwelling Homo Sapiens certainly lets him into the club; however, in typical Lee fashion, nothing further of this connection was ever made). The X-Men first met the Avengers in issue #9, although it should be noted that in a continuity implant in *The Rampaging Hulk# 2* the X-Men "met" the Hulk and a line-up of pre-Avengers Avengers. However, this "meeting" (as was all of the implant stories in *The Rampaging Hulk*) were actually a series of fictional movies created by a space-faring alien known as a Krylorian, who happened across the Earth and discovered the Hulk. The Krylorian returned home and simply invented stories about the Hulk and many of Earth's heroes of the 1960s for the amusement of his people. Ka-Zar and the Savage Land were first introduced to the Marvel Universe in issue #10 and the Human Torch was co-opted by Professor X to help subdue the Juggernaut in issue #13.

Out of costume, the team also began to grow as we saw them participate in a number of normal teenage activities, including going to a beatnik-like hangout for poetry readings, meeting girls (Hank and Warren first met long-time girlfriends Vera (no last name) and Candy Southern during this era). At one point Jean left the Xavier Mansion and the professor's tutelage when her parents made her transfer to Metro College. Still, it was the team's costumed adventures that drove the issues, as Thomas moved them further and further away from the FF-family atmosphere and began to treat them more and more like the schoolmates/team-members that they were.

One of the most endearing aspects of the book at this time were the solid penciling skills of Werner Roth, whose art graced the lion's share of issues from #23-57. Roth's work was nowhere as flashy as today's artists, but for those fans who grew up reading the *X-Men* during this era, it was one of the things that kept them (us) coming back. Roth's clean lines and straightforward storytelling abilities grounded the non-superhero portions of the book in reality, while at the same time making the superhero aspects of it totally believable. Further, his style meshed quite well with Thomas' writing ability.

Thomas had a way of combining the fantastic with the sublime, as he did particularly well in one sequence where he had the team go to a bank for a loan for airplane tickets to Europe, where they had to rescue the Professor from the clutches of Factor Three. (They had no money of their own, as everything was in the Professor's name.) After being turned down for the loan, they drove off in the Professor's Rolls Royce, much to the amazement of the loan officer. The Factor Three story, an early example of an on-going storyline, ran hot and cold for a year as the X-Men ran down numerous blind alleys in their attempt to unearth the villainous, and other-worldly, Mutant-Master.

Shortly after the defeat of Mu-

tant-Master, three important things occurred to the team. First they acquired new uniforms (#39), allowing them more individuality than their blue and yellow school colors. Second, issue #39 also began a back-up series that revealed the origins of most of the team members. At the time, Jean Grey's origin was left off, and it wasn't until *Bizarre Adventures* #27, (1981, 14 years later), that we learned anything about her pre-X-Men life. These five-page back-ups run through issue #57, each telling how the various X-Men first discovered their power and joined the team. At the conclusion of each origin, there was an additional featurette explaining how each person's powers worked. Even though Marvel Girl didn't get an origin, a featurette about her powers did appear in issue #57.

The third thing that occurred (even though readers didn't discover it until much later), was that the Changeling, originally a stooge for Factor Three, took over the role of Professor X. Changeling was dying and wanted to make amends for his life of crime. The Professor allowed him to do this as he was involved in some important research at the time and couldn't be interrupted. Thus, in issue #43, "the Professor" (actually the Changeling) died, which caused FBI Agent Fred Duncan (introduced in the team's origins via the back-up stories), to "take-over" operation of the team. He split them up for a short time, only to have them re-gather to fight of Mesmero and a bogus Magneto (#49).

For several issues -- from #49 to the end of their original run (#66) -- the book was the flashiest it ever was in those early days. It sported a trio of covers (#49-51) by Jim Steranko who also redesigned the logo with issue #50 and inked the interior of #50 and 51. Arnold Drake -- another favorite of older fans -- penciled issues #47-54, while issue #53 was inked by Barry Windsor-Smith, his first Marvel work). The rest of the original run of the series was penciled by Neil Adams, who missed only #64 and 66, giving the team one heck of a flashy send-off.

During these stories, numerous important things occurred to the X-Men, which would become very significant aspects of their later lives. Among them were the introductions of Lorna "Polaris" Dane (#49), Scott's younger brother Alex "Havok" Summers (#54), Sauron (#60), Sunfire (#64), and Magneto's "false" mutants, the Mutates (#62). In addition, the Sentinels were sent into orbit around the sun (#57-59), plus Magneto returned and was seen without his mask for the first time (#62). Still, the most important event took place in those issues in #65. It was in this issue that Professor X returned and galvanized the team to defend the Earth against the Z'Nox invasion. Aside from the return of Professor X, the real importance of this story wouldn't begin to manifest itself until issue #97 when Princess Lilandra Neramani of the Shi'ar galaxy would be introduced. It seems that during this battle -- while the Professor was gathering "good, strong-willed individuals to psychically battle the Z'Nox -- the Professor inadvertently made contact with Lilandra who was fleeing usurpers of her throne. As today's fans know, Lilandra and the Shi'ar have played a major role in the lives of the current X-Men ever since.

Unfortunately, all this was not enough to save the book, as it was canceled with issue #66. The cancellation actually lasted nine months, for the series was brought back as a reprint title; reprinting issues #12-45. The book once again resumed original stories with *X-Men #94* (which followed the introduction of the new team that occurred in *Giant-Sized X-Men #1*). While this team was ushered in by Len Wein, he left the series with issue #95, and Chris Claremont began his astounding 18-year run on the title. Dave Cockrum and John Byrne swapped off on the art until issue #150, with Cockrum's run forming book-ends to Byrne's work. Other notable artists whose work has since graced the series include Paul Smith, John Romita, Jr., John Bolton (who penciled the implant stories crafted for *X-Men Classic*), and Barry Windsor-Smith.

Sure, the X-Men of today are a dynamic and ever-changing force in comics, but there are those fans who consider some of that very early work to contain some high-water marks as well. Considering the immense popularity of not only this series, but of any book with an "X" in the title for those of us who were there at the beginning, it is still somewhat of a surprise that this misunderstood band of misfits whose genes were so badly manhandled by the atom have not only come quite this far, but have become as popular as they are today. Thirty years ago, no one would have been able to predict the impact of this team, not only on the Marvel line, but on comics themselves. Further, given their popularity today, one can only wonder what comics would be like today if the book had not been revived and kept going as a reprint title for five years until the new team came along. Makes you think, doesn't it?

Happy anniversary, X-Men.

A Conversation With...
Kristine and Keith

by Kyle Davidson

Kristine Brennan and Keith Paul are the co-creators of Lathe which will be published by Sky Comics in November of this year. Here's what they have to say about it.

"Hey, what do these little alien slime thingies sound like?"

"Sploch."

"Sploch. I like that." Kristine Brennan smiles as she carefully types the sound effect into he word processor, then wrinkles her nose as the spell checker warns her that 'sploch' isn't a real word. Her collaborator, Keith Paul, laughs and returns to the page on his drafting table. They're working on *Lathe*, a no-holds-barred science fiction epic to be published by Sky Comics beginning in November.

Lathe concerns a group of teenagers whose physical and mental abilities have been accelerated by an alien race called the Gi'eri. "I'd hesitate to call them superheroes," Kristine is quick to point out. "We've tried to maintain the level of realism used in popular science fiction films. Our characters don't wear costumes; they don't have secret identities. They're real people dealing with an unreal situation.

"Science fiction is about the absence of conventional boundaries, and there only a finite amount of themes to explore; teleportation, flight, mind-reading. We're not pretending we've invented something new, here. We're trying to explore the ramifications of classic themes in new ways.

"There's a real dearth of inventiveness in the science fiction industry; creators tend to consume the same art they produce, from superheroes to monster films to *Star Trek* episodes, which leads to endless cannibalization of the same ideas. Distilling all the information from all the science fiction films we've ever seen, we learn only one thing for sure: women will wear less clothing. SF has always been more about current fantasies than serious futurology." Kristine's sources tend to be eclectic; math theory, quantum physics, artificial intelligence. She has a background in computer technology (Kristine co-wrote a book on computers when she was fifteen and currently works as a computer consultant), which she hopes will lend plausibility to the science fiction elements of the series. "Reading science fiction written by someone who's obviously just glanced at the cover of a *Discover Magazine* is just so painful. Why do spaceships in a zero-G environment always arbitrarily chose the same direction as 'up'?

Kristine began writing comics in the first grade, creating literally hundreds of 'minis' until she became disenchanted with the two-dimensionality of superheroes and drifted into more traditional writing. It wasn't until a friend lent her Alan Moore and

Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen* that she regained enthusiasm for the potential of the medium. "Moore's writing was a revelation," she smiles without looking up from her typing. "I didn't realize it was possible to write graphic fiction with such depth." She counts Moebius, Kyle Baker, Dave Sim, Art Spiegleman, Bill Watterson, and Jim Woodring as her favorite writers and John Muth as her favorite artist.

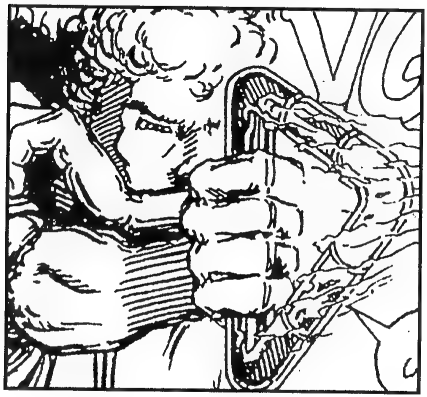
Keith was entranced early on by the paintings of Frank Frazetta, the design work of the Dean brothers and the elaborate fantasies of Moebius. Artwork by such artists as Walt Disney, Chuck Jones, the Buscema brothers, Gil Kane, Neal Adams, George Perez, and John Byrne influenced him to pursue visual storytelling. Keith created educational comics for a New England company from the ground up, writing, penciling, inking, lettering, and coloring complete issues before deciding to break into the mainstream. He won the Marvel Age Magazine 'Best Pencils' award at the Atlanta Fantasy Fair in 1986 and 1987, for which he was featured in the New Talent Department of *Marvel Age Magazine #49*. Keith currently works as a freelance graphic artist and teaches airbrush for the Rhode Island School of Design. He met Kristine through a flyer she had posted at Michael Taylor's Fantasy Zone in North Kingstown, RI.

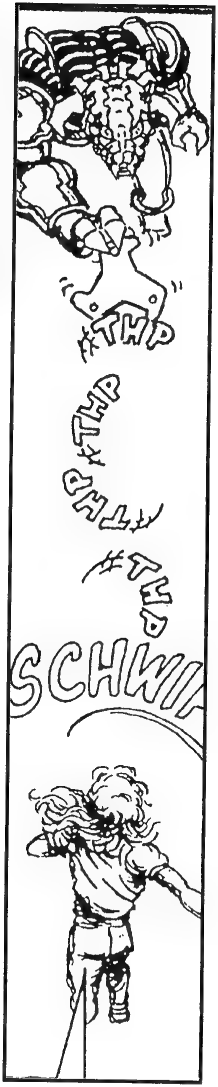
There are two traditional styles of scripting comic books in the United States, neither of which seemed right for the Lathe project. Comics created with the 'Marvel method' are plotted, pencilled, then 'dialogued,' placing most of the burden of storytelling on the penciller. 'Full scripts,' by contrast, detail panel breakdowns and sometimes even camera angles and lighting, making some artists feel like little more than foils for the writer's vision. *Lathe* was scripted as if it were a screenplay, allowing Keith a director's freedom to make visual decisions without detracting from the foundation of a solid story.

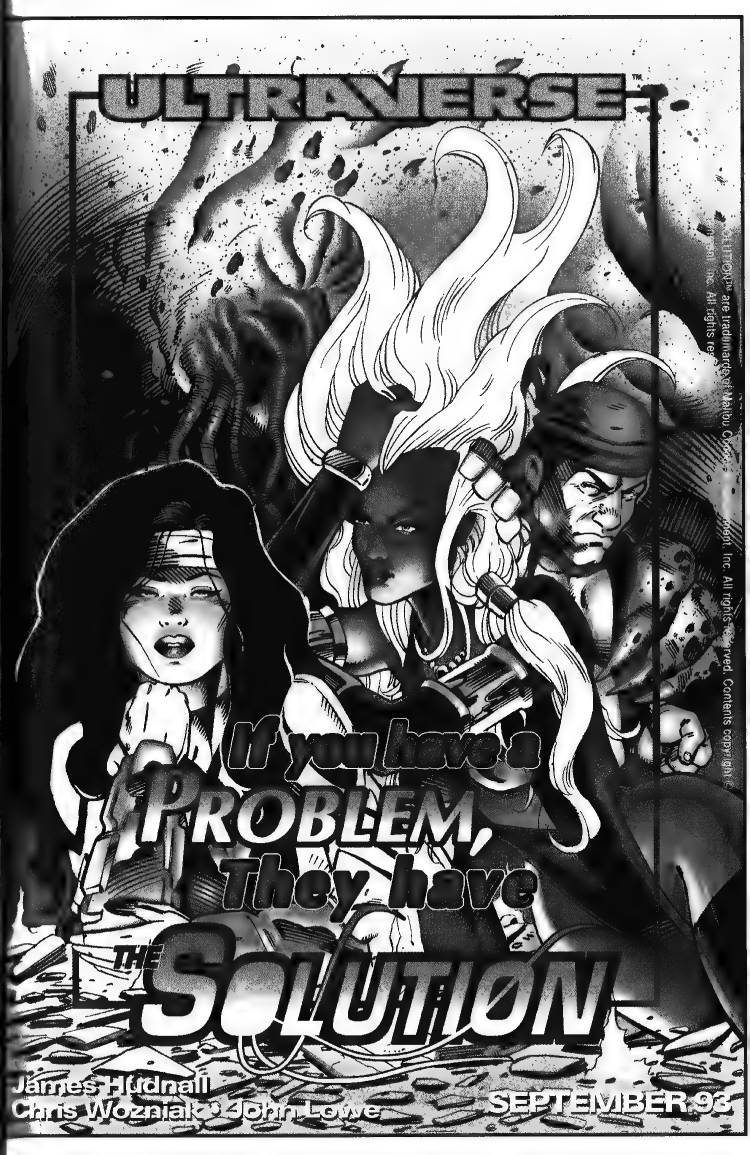
Lathe explores cutting-edge technologies through strong writing and fantastic art while remaining accessible. So why should you read it?

"The sound effects!"

"Sploch!"



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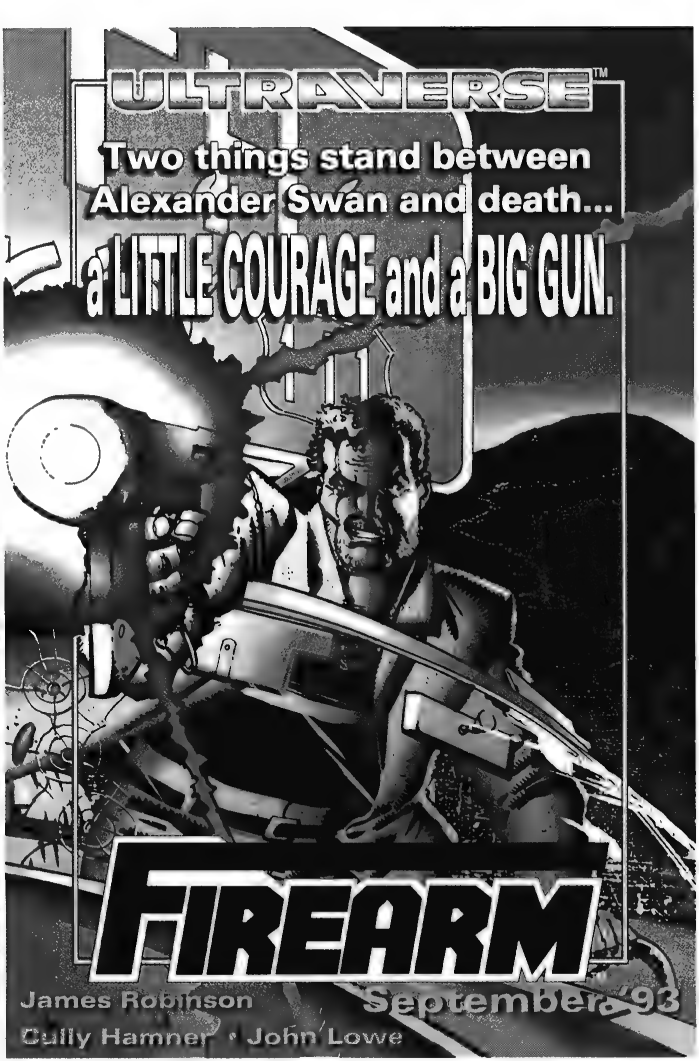

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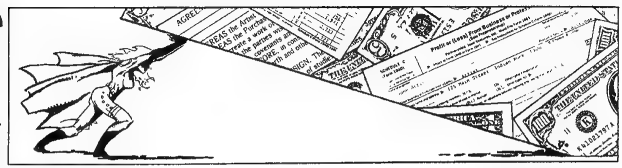

Getting Into The BUSINESS Of Comics

by Lurene Haines

Part 7: The Legal Business of the Biz

Last month I covered feedback and critiques - getting them and using them to improve both your work and your chances at getting work. This time around, we're going to look at the legal aspects of the comic industry. If you have achieved a sufficient level of creative expertise that you are now being offered work, this represents many legal and business ramifications. Let's look at how they can, and will, affect you as a professional.

There are many critical aspects to conducting yourself as a business professional. Your first question might be, *"Why do I have to know this stuff, or how to do it?"* Simple. Not only does your knowledge of these elements protect you as a new professional, but they prove to the company hiring you that you are an accomplished, organized and reliable businessperson.

You might also ask, *"Can't I just hire somebody to handle all this stuff for me?"* Probably, if you have sufficient funds. But do you really want to turn over your livelihood and working future to a stranger or trusted family member, and be a) unaware of what's really going on, or b) shocked when you discover that this trusted relative/employee has bilked you or screwed up a crucial deal? Neither of these situations may necessarily arise, but always keep one thing in mind; it's very hard to discuss a potential project with an editor if you have to say, "I'll have my agent/lawyer call you to sort out the details." As a newcomer this is both pretentious and foolhardy, as it prevents you from familiarizing yourself with how the industry works, and what types of expectations are reasonable to maintain. Once you are firmly established as a popular pro, then you can feel free to employ a whole entourage to take care of your every need. Meanwhile, let's address this issue as a creator just getting started.

Business and Legal Practices

There are a variety of components that make up the business and legal practices of our industry. They share many characteristics with other careers in the visual and print mediums (such as magazine illustrators and photographers, book writers, freelance journalists, etc.). *Negotiations, contracts, standard forms, copyright, ownership of original works, reproductions, licensing, merchandising and taxes* are just a few of the items that fall under this heading. There are extensive volumes of material available on these subjects. For the purposes of this column I'll just give a brief overview of some of the more important areas, with an emphasis on how they apply to the comic industry. It is advised that you make use of the reading list I will provide at the end of this article, to learn more about each of these subjects.

Negotiations

Negotiating a work agreement involves the creator and publisher representative striving to accommodate each others needs, while determining the elements of the contract. The terms of a contract are reached by negotiation. The purpose is not to defeat the other party, but for each party to feel that their needs have been satisfied. An editor must decide whether the work to be provided by the creator will suit the needs of the project, and will fall within it's financial budget. The editor must also ensure that the creator can meet the project deadlines.

The creator, like any business person, must cover their overhead and make enough profit to live on. Therefore, the more information each party has about the other the more effective the negotiation.

If a creator knows ahead of time how much a company generally pays for work, then the creator will be able better able to figure out what asking price will be reasonable. The editor's offer is constrained by company guidelines and project restrictions, so any information they have about the creator's business requirements will help the negotiations go smoothly. If either the creator or the editor is unable, or unwilling, to meet the needs of the other, the negotiation will fail and the editor or creator may seek a contract elsewhere.

To ensure that negotiations are conducted fairly, it is important for you as a creator to approach the situation armed with knowledge. Familiarize yourself with the standard contractual agreement used by the company. Also, secure a copy of Fair Practice Guidelines (see reading list at the end of this article), to ensure you are informed about how negotiations should be conducted.

In our industry negotiations vary depending on the degree a professional is established. If you are a name commanding some attention, long established in the industry, negotiations go quite differently than those with a newcomer. As a new professional, you should listen carefully to what is offered, assess the value and desirability of the work contract, and make a decision. Don't dawdle in deciding, and be firm in your decisions. Sometimes I am saddened to learn of a newcomer who has hurriedly accepted a publishing agreement without familiarizing themselves with the company's reputation. The burning desire to 'be published' blinds them to the facts. There are many disreputable publishers who prey on naive newcomers. Your best defense is to be as informed about your work negotiations as possible. Do some research, make some phone calls. Ask a lot of questions. Only these things will keep you from getting burned down the road.

Contracts

What is a *contract?* Physically there are many, many different contract forms. They can be preprinted forms and specially typeset agreements. They can also be found in the fine print of purchase orders and payment invoice chits provided by the publisher. They can even be stamped on a payment check. Pay attention to what you're signing. It might just be your contract!

The contract is by far the most important business aspect of becoming a professional. I cannot emphasize this enough! No matter how badly you want to work and establish yourself, nobody wants to work free. A contract is protection for both you and your employer. I can't begin to count the astonishing number of aspiring, or newly established, professionals who have poured out a horror story about how they were brutally exploited by a publisher. It happens a lot in this industry. Because of the casual nature of the convention circuit and it's related social angle, many "agreements" are formed over a drink at the bar - often without so much as a simple handshake. Here's an example: Joe Editor leans over his beer, slaps Joe Creator on the shoulder and says "Hey! We've got this really hot project we'd like *you* to pencil. We'll pay you $200.00 per page, and the deadline is pretty open." Joe Creator's eyes light up, and little cash register noises go off in his head. He says, "Man, that's great! I won't let you down!!" Six months later, Joe Editor and Joe Creator are doing the 'Courtroom Two-Step'. Joe Editor cries about missed deadlines and his subsequent lost revenues, and Joe Creator cries about the lack of payment and his inability to meet Joe Editor's unreasonable - and previously unmentioned - deadlines. This might sound like a silly scenario but, except for the names, it has happened time and again in our business. Don't put yourself in this situation.

Types of Contracts

Work for Hire

According to copyright law, in a work made for hire, 'the employer or other person for whom the work was prepared is considered the author/artist for purposes of this title, and, unless the parties have expressly agreed otherwise in a written instrument signed by them (the employer or other person for whom the work was prepared) owns all the rights comprised in the copyright.'

Note that a work only becomes a work for hire when there is a signed (by both

THE ECLECTUS LTD. GUIDE TO:

GETTING YOUR MONEY FROM A PUBLISHER!

STEP ONE: THE DEMAND LETTER Send a polite, but clear, letter demanding that you be paid at once for the money that is owed to you. Do not threaten in any manner, other than to state that you will proceed to Court by a certain date if payment is not received.

STEP TWO: SMALL CLAIMS COURT Designed to allow laymen to proceed without an attorney, Small Claims Court has the ability to hear cases concerning up to $2,000.00 in value. Check your local court to determine the money limits for your area. If your demand letter hasn't resulted in payment, you should probably go there. If you are owed more than the jurisdictional limit of your Small Claims Court, you should probably consult an attorney.

STEP THREE: IS THE BUSINESS THAT YOU WISH TO SUE A CORPORATION?

Special rules apply if your 'target' is a corporation. Call the "SECRETARY OF CORPORATIONS", a State Agency usually, and ask them if "Acme" (or whatever) is registered as a corporation. If so, ask them: "Who is named to receive service of process?" That's who you serve your Small Claims Lawsuit on!

What if the Secretary of Corporations says "Never heard of them."?

1. They may be listed under a different name. For example, the now defunct Pacific Comics was actually the unofficial name of 'Blue Dolphin, Inc.' Here's a suggestion: call or write the FICTIOUS NAME STATMENT division of the municipal goverment that the Business operates out of. They will usually have the real name of the Business listed along with their DBA (doing business as) names. Armed with the real Corporation name, you can call the Secretary of Corporations and get the data you need so you can sue the right guy.

2. The Business may not be a Corporation, after all. If not, sue the 'owner.' You might have to ask around, if you're not sure. Somebody will probably know. Most Businesses that you will deal with will be Corporations, however.

STEP FOUR: ONCE YOU ARE AT SMALL CLAIMS COURT It is advisable to write a short statment, typed, explaining the basic facts of the dispute. Tell the judge that you want to "file a trial brief in lieu of an opening statement." This will allow you to get all the facts to the Judge without him cutting you off, or you getting too nervous. Be polite, no matter how much of a jerk the other guy is. Show the Judge any documents (contracts and so on) that you might have to support your claim.

STEP FIVE: ONCE YOU WIN YOUR CASE The Court will give you a paper called the "Judgment." If you're lucky, the Business will pay you at once. If not, you will have to "collect" upon the Judgment. Go and see your local Marshal, who can help you attach bank accounts, or seek out further collection advise from your local Law Library. You can even assign the debt to Collection Agencies, although they will take a hefty piece.

WARNING: BE VERY CAREFUL REGARDING DOING BUSINESS WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF YOUR OWN STATE, IT MAKES SUEING THEM ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE. ALSO, A BUSINESS MAY BE REGISTERED AS A CORPORATION IN ONE STATE, BUT NOT ANOTHER, SO CALL THE SECRETARY OF CORPORATIONS IN THE STATE THE BUSINESS OPERATES OUT OF. TRY TO SUE IN YOUR OWN STATE IF THE BUSINESS OPERATES IN ANY WAY IN YOUR OWN STATE (FOR EXAMPLE, IF THE BUSINESS DISTRIBUTES IT'S PRODUCT IN YOUR STATE, YOU MAY HAVE ENOUGH OF A 'NEXUS' TO SUE.

Some more tips:

1. Try and get at least 50% of your money "up front." You'll do a lot better, that way. After all, you can't go buy food on promises, can you?

2. Make sure you have some type of written agreement. It doesn't have to be a formal contract, but a letter signed by you and the business should suffice, if the basic terms are included: How much, when will it be paid, how much up front, and other specifics. Think it our carefully. Remember to consider who will own the copyright, who will own the character and so on. A written agreement will keep everybody a bit more honest.

3. Don't be bullied. Stand your ground, and sue if you don't get paid. Most bad guys will fold at Court. If they show up at Court, that's a good sign, as it usually means that they will pay you if they lose.

4. Don't be afraid to go to your local Law Library. Ask the Law Librarian to point out any books on Small Claims Court Procedure. Also, some Small Claims Courts have attorneys who will help you for free file your case. Ask!

GOOD LUCK!

ROD E. UNDERHILL
Attorney at Law

IT REALLY ISN'T ALL THAT HARD, WITH A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE!

parties) written instrument expressly agreeing that the work is to be considered a work for hire. In addition, it is sometimes possible to reserve certain rights, such as the right to reproduce the work in other media. This should be considered when the negotiating is done.

In the comic industry, the *work for hire contract* - also called a work made for hire contract - (WFH) is a double-edged sword. On one hand, you are generally being offered the opportunity to work on an established character owned by a major company. This means that an established fan following most likely already exists for work produced around this character, and the potential for income-generation is great. Also, depending on your WFH contract, your royalties may help deter the cost of losing any rights to reproduction of your work. On the other hand, you did lose any rights to reproduce your work. To use an art example: If you produce a truly 'kick-ass' pin-up or splash page, say hello to plenty of exposure and advertising without payment. On first glance, this might seem an ego-gratifying experience, but on retrospection, you may find yourself feeling bitter about the benefits to the company that don't trickle down to you. Remember, it's a double-edged sword. Just be sure you know which side you're on, and how much it matters to you before you sign all your rights away. (See Figure A for an example of a WFH contract.)

Creator-Owned Rights

Another type of contract available in our business is the *creator-owned rights contract (COR)*. For many creators this is the contract of choice. Depending on what agreement you negotiate with the publisher, this contract represents the most control for the creator. It provides that the creator is the sole author and owner of the material they create, and lets them decide where, when, why and how their work is reproduced.

The COR contract does not always equal immediate financial success. Sometimes the initial monies produced by a creator-owned property are small. But over time, and if the work is properly promoted, it can represent a substantial financial gain. Sometimes, at a later date, a creator may choose to sell all rights to their creation. That is fine, but remember they would never have had that right if the initial contract was a WFH agreement.

COR agreements can also give the creator a say in how their work is reproduced. With a WFH agreement, once the work is in the publisher's hands, the creator relinquishes all quality control. Whereas a COR agreement allows the creator some control in how the work is reproduced, and the markets at which it's directed. It can also allow the creator the right to reproduce the work as often as they wish.

Basically, the COR agreement gives the creator more latitude and control than the WFH agreement. However, from a publisher's standpoint, the WFH is more desirable, and so you will find that most of the major publishers use the WFH agreement, with the COR agreement residing primarily with the smaller, creator-supportive independents. (See Figure B for an example of a COR contract.)

There are a great variety of contract types, and each offers different rights and compensations. To find out more detail about contracts, check out some of the books noted on the reading list at the end of this article.

Contract Pointers

Here are a few things you should know about contracts:

1) Always, always, *always* have a written contract. Although the belief that a contract must be in writing to be enforced is false, it is foolish to believe that enforcing a casual verbal agreement is an easy process. There are a multitude of reasons for having a written contract. Mainly it protects both you and your employer's interests. But most importantly it outlines, in black and white, the specifics of the agreement. This allows you to check on things like established deadlines, payment, royalties, complimentary copies of published work, the copyright holder, and any other features of the agreement, at any time during your work on the project. Simply put, it eliminates your questions, and serves as a written guide to what must be done, by whom and by what date, in exchange for what compensation.

2) Read you contract. Make sure that all the details that have been discussed are included in the written contract - right down to the number of free copies of the published work you should receive. If you don't outline it at the beginning, you may regret it in the end.

CONTRACT AGREEMENT FORM - CREATOR OWNED RIGHTS

This agreement is entered into between ***Insert Publisher Name*** (hereinafter Publisher) having a publishing address of ***Insert Publisher Address***, and ***Insert Artist/Writer Name*** (hereinafter Artist/Writer) having an address of ***Insert Artist/Writer Address***.

Effective ***Insert Date of Agreement***, the Publisher agrees to employ the Artist/Writer to produce ***Insert Name and Description of Work and Publication*** (hereinafter Work).

The Publisher agrees to pay the Artist/Writer the sum of ***Insert Amount of Payment*** as compensation for First Printing Rights of the Work. Payment will be made within 30 days of receipt of the finished Work. If the Publisher does not pay the full amount within 30 days of receipt of Work, a late charge of ***Insert Amount of Late Charge*** will be added to the cost of the work, up to a maximum late charge of ***Insert Max. Charge***. Execution of the Work will begin upon verbal and/or written approval from the Publisher, and will be delivered no later than ***Insert Deadline Date*** provided that approval is given no later than ***Insert Approval Deadline***. If Work is not delivered by this date, a late charge of ***Insert Penalty Charge*** will be deducted from the cost of the work, up to a maximum of ***Insert Max. Penalty*** in late charges.

In the event that the Publisher decides not to use the finished Work, they will be required to pay the Artist/Writer a "kill fee" payment of ***Insert Kill Fee (generally 50% of the proposed payment)***.

The finished Work is copyrighted by ***Insert Artist/Writer Name***, and the Publisher is entitled to First Printing Rights only, for ***Insert Name and Description of Publication***. All other rights will be negotiated separately.

The Publisher will provide the Artist/Writer with ***Insert Number (usually anywhere from 15 to 25)*** free copies each of the printed cover from ***Insert Name and Description of Publication***.

Insert Name of Publisher

Artist/Writer

_____

_____

By: ***Insert Agents Name***

By: ***Artist/Writer Name***

FIGURE B. An example of a simple Creator-Owned Rights agreement.

FIGURE A. An example of a DC Comics Work For Hire Contract/Payment Invoice

DC COMICS TALENT INVOICE

DC FORM #: 105 (Rev 8/00)

Date: _____ Expense Code: _____

Talent: _____
(Insert name of company if contracting party is incorporated)

Employee: _____
(Insert name of individual who will be performing services for contracting party if contracting party is incorporated)

Address: _____

TALENT INVOICE for work produced for DC Comics pursuant to the Agreement dated as of the above date between Talent and DC Comics with respect to the following (the "Work"):

Services. ☐ Script 000 1200 1010 ☐ Cover ☐ Layouts 000 1200 2030
☐ Text 000 1200 1010 ☐ Painted Cover ☐ Finishes over layouts 000 1200 2040
☐ Plot / Breakdown 000 1200 1020 ☐ Sketch 000 1200 2010 ☐ Logo 000 1200 1040
☐ Dialogue 000 1200 1030 ☐ Pencils 000 1200 2000 ☐ Graphic Services _____ (specify)
☐ Synopsis 000 1200 1040 ☐ Inks 000 1200 2020 ☐ Other _____ (specify)

Project Title: _____

Pages: _____ x Page / Cover Rate: $ _____ = Total: $ _____ [OR] Flat Fee $ _____

☐ Federal ID No. or S.S. No. _____
(If contracting party is incorporated, insert Federal I.D. no. of company)

REQUESTED BY: _____ APPROVED BY: _____

SHADED AREAS FOR CORPORATIONS ONLY

(see reverse side for continuation)

ACCEPTED AND AGREED

By: X _____ By: _____
Talent's Signature (if Employee Owner's Signature and title if Talent is incorporated) DC COMICS

I hereby acknowledge that I am familiar with and approve of the terms of the foregoing Agreement. I further acknowledge that I have entered into an employment agreement with Talent in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Agreement including, without limitation, the applicable provisions of Paragraph 8 thereof. If Talent shall fail to fulfill any of its obligations under the Agreement for any reason, then, in addition to any other remedies that may be available, DC may require that I render my personal services and fulfill all of Talent's obligations directly to DC upon the same terms and conditions set forth in the Agreement. I shall look solely to Talent for the payment of any and all compensation or other payment that may be required to be made as a result of any rendition of services arising under this Agreement.

_____ _____
(Employee's Signature if Talent is incorporated) (Employee's S.S. No.)

3) Make sure both parties sign thecontract. Too simple? Apparently not, as there are many creators who sit on their contracts (out of laziness, busyness or forgetfulness) until after the project has been completed, then cry the blues when there is nothing to force the employer to honor their end of the bargain.

4) Ensure that you get an original copy of the contract. Two originals should be executed. The creator and the employer should each get a copy of the original. If legal problems arise, do you really want to try to explain to your lawyer why you only have a photocopy?

5) Make sure you understand all the language and items listed in your contract *before* you sign it. Yes folks, legalese is still alive and well, and confusing the best of us laymen. Don't be overwhelmed by it all. If the language of your contract is too heavy for you to wade through, first talk to the publisher about it. If they are unable or unwilling to simplify the language - or can't explain it to your satisfaction - then consider spending a small sum to have a business lawyer look it over for you. Don't balk at the idea of the cost! Not all lawyers are costly, cutthroat, or inept. Most areas have a lawyer referral service, lawyers for the financially burdened, or a law school brimming with eager students. Use any of these avenues to have your contract deciphered. Don't sign it until you understand it, and are satisfied with the conditions.

Standard Business Forms

Formal contracts are not the only way to confirm an agreement in writing. There are a variety of standardized business forms you can use in the place of specifically drafted contractual agreements. Some of these include the *letter of intent, an outright bill of sale, permission to reproduce work in a publication, and billing invoice.*

Letters of intent signed by both parties can also serve as a form of contract. A letter of intent is simply a letter outlining the intent of both the creator and the publisher with regard to the creation of work, assignment of rights, and compensation for said work. Be cautious in your use of the letter of intent, however, particularly with publishers who avoid a formal written contract. Their avoidance may represent a private agenda that will not benefit you as the creator.

The *bill of sale* does not always apply to the publishing portion of the comic industry, but is still an important aspect of which the creator should be aware. Your original artwork is generally considered your property, even in the cases of WFH. The only restriction in WFH cases, is the fact that you are usually not free to reproduce the image. However, you are free to sell the original artwork if you so choose. In these cases, the bill of sale comes into play.

The bill of sale stipulates to the buyer, just what rights they purchase when buying an original work. If your original publishing agreement is COR, then you have the freedom to sell reproduction rights to your buyer, in addition to the original work. Outline these features in your bill of sale description to ensure there is no misunderstanding about just what is being purchased. (For more information, and a sample of a bill of sale, please refer to the reading list at the end of this article.)

The *form granting permission to reproduce a work in a publication* is a simplified contract form. Keep in mind, unless all aspects of the agreement are stipulated in writing and signed by both parties, there can be problems - because of a lack of communication or understanding - at some point in the future. However, the permission form is an excellent starting point for newcomers, and most publishers use a modified version of this form (Examples are available in books listed below.)

The *billing invoice* is a common method of formalizing the written WFH agreement for the major publishers in our industry. For example, both DC Comics and Marvel Comics provide creators with a payment chit or invoice. When the work is turned in, the invoice is filled out and signed. Small print on the invoice forms the contract agreement that, generally, is signed only by the creator not the publisher representative. Read these 'mini-contracts' with care. You may be surprised at just what rights you are freely signing away.

Another version of the billing invoice, is a simple bill for work done. These types of billing invoices are generally produced and provided by the creator. However, don't denigrate their value. By executing and submitting such a bill, and on its acceptance by

the publisher, a form of contractual agreement takes place. Granted it is a simplified contract that describes work produced for specific compensation, and that does not outline rights or royalties, but it is an agreement (generally enforceable) all the same.

Although these preprinted or standard forms can be convenient and efficient, use them with care as there are some risks that are inherent. Problems with preprinted forms include inaccurate descriptions, accidental (or intentional) omission of parts of the agreement, and inadvertent creation of obligations and rights that were never intended by either party. Approach the use of standardized forms with the awareness that the form as it stands, may not be a comprehensive expression of your actual agreement.

Copyright

Copyright is a complex issue that we have already touched upon under the contract heading describing creator-owned rights. The ability for a writer or artist to make a living is greatly dependent upon their ability to control the authorship of their work. In one sense, this characteristic is what sets the comic publishing market apart from other visual and print mediums. In our industry, many works on which we are employed as creators, have already been 'authored' by another creator. We are simply brought on board to continue to develop the property - ie. , continue the series. Under these circumstances, it is not unreasonable for the publisher to expect a creator to 'work for hire', as they are technically the 'author' of the materials on which you as a creator will work.

There are many critical details about copyright law in this country, and it is in your best interest as a creator, and a professional, to research how this information applies to you, and protecting your career.

Ownership of Original Works

As mentioned earlier, in the comic publishing industry creators are generally entitled to keep the original work reproduced by a company for publication.

For example, if you are hired to pencil an issue of *Green Lantern* for DC Comics, the standard artist agreement is a work for hire contract. Since DC Comics owns the rights to the Green Lantern characters, you as a creator are simply being employed to produce new artwork for their existing property. You will most likely be paid a flat page-rate for each page of pencils you produce, and a small royalty (which you will share with the inker and writer), based on the volume of sales. You will not be entitled to reproduce the work in any form, without the permission of the publisher. However, you most likely will retain ownership of the original artwork, which you are permitted to sell as an original work (although *not* for reproduction.)

Read any contract agreement carefully, however, as there are many publishers who wish to purchase not only all-rights, but the original artwork as well. This is usually stipulated in the written agreement. If ownership is not mentioned, be sure to include - or insist they include - a line describing who retains ownership of the physical work. Nothing can be more heartbreaking than finding out you signed away your favorite piece of work!

Reproductions

The comic publishing industry in which you now search for work, is basically a big reproduction business. Your contract agreements assign *reproduction rights* to your publisher(s). This is a complex and multi-faceted subject that cannot be easily covered in this overview article and merits some additional research and reading. Be sure to look into this subject in the reading list at the end of this article. However, there is one aspect I would like to address, since it is a relatively new angle affecting reproductions of original works.

According to an article in the May 1993 issue of *The Artist's Magazine*, recent changes in copyright laws (due to a surprise ruling from the Copyright Office) have affected the ownership of reproductions of original artwork. What this means is that until just recently, on reproductions of a creator's work (ie. lithographic prints, photographic prints, color photocopies, etc.) the creator retained the copyright. However, since a derivative work can be copyrighted in their own right, a recent ruling by the Copyright Office significantly

affects copyright of a creator's work. The Copyright Office determined that a derivative work is any "work based upon one or more preexisting works, such as a translation . . . art reproduction . . . or any other form in which the work may be recast, transformed or adapted. A work consisting of editorial revisions . . . or other modifications, which as a whole, represent an original work of authorship."

Simply (and frighteningly) stated, this means that any employee of a copier shop or printer who fiddles with the color or line or magnification controls when reproducing your work, has provided sufficient editorial revisions to consider themselves the author of a derivative work, and the copyright holder of that - and any subsequent - reproductions. Aaagh! To make this even clearer, according to the *Artist's Magazine* article, this means that every time you have copies or prints of your work made, you need to have the company and/or its representatives sign a release of copyright back to you. Or, you need to include a text line stating copyright details for both the original image and it's reproductions.

You may be saying to yourself, "So what's this got to do with getting into comic the business?" Well, if you are a professional business person, you will keep careful documentation of your work. Photographs and photocopies don't just help keep your records straight, but they also protect you against shipping accidents that can lose or destroy your work. After all, it's much easier to reproduce a page of pencil art, if you have a photocopy of the original from which to work! So keep in mind, while you conscientiously reproduce your work for documentation purposes, you must get a signed release to protect your reproduction rights.

Licensing

The subject of *licensing* can be divided into two categories in the comic industry. There's the creator work on licensed material, and the licensing of materials produced by the creator. Huh? Let me explain.

Work on licensed materials means that you are hired - on a WFH basis! - to produce material based on established characters. The publisher who hires you has purchased a license, from another company, to create original materials based on those characters. The license entitles them to hire under WFH agreements only. All materials produced, become either the joint possession of the publisher and the license holder or, as often happens, the sole possession of the license holder. An example of this would be the case of Lucasfilm and Dark Horse Comics.

Dark Horse currently holds the license to produce original *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars* materials. This agreement limits them to comic book materials, but they are free to negotiate other licenses with Lucasfilm. Lucasfilm, the copyright holder of the *Indy* and *Star Wars* characters, becomes the owner of new materials produced by the creators who work for Dark Horse. Lucasfilm is free to resell those materials to other licensees, such as computer game companies, without compensating the original creator of the material. On the one hand, many newcomers would be delighted to have an opportunity to work with these firmly established - and very popular - characters. On the other hand, the financial gain is limited, and the control the creator exerts over reproduction of their work is nonexistent. Consider these facts carefully before signing a WFH agreement for licensed material.

Licensing of materials produced by a creator is another matter altogether. This means, if you create a particular character, then you can control the licensing of that character and image. You can sell licenses to various publishers and merchandisers, and you control what is produced, and make a substantial profit from those reproductions. An example is Matt Wagner.

Matt created the character of *Grendel*, which was published by Comico for many years. When Comico changed hands (and after a fierce legal struggle) Matt was able to take his character to other publishers, recently licensing it's use with DC and Dark Horse Comics. Another example of licensing is Dave Steven's character, *The Rocketeer*. For many years, Dave also licensed out the use of his character, however, within the past couple of years, Dave sold his rights to Disney/Touchstone Pictures.

There is a distinctive difference between the two forms of licensing. Make sure

that you are clear on which one is specified if licensing is included in one of your contract agreements.

Merchandising

Reproduction of your work on materials other than the original book publication falls under the heading of merchandising. This can include prints, t-shirts, toys, sculptures, buttons, caps, pogs (cardboard milk-cap collectibles), trading cards, and anything else a merchandiser comes up with on which to place your work image. This subject relates primarily to artwork rather than writing, although sometimes quotes of text have been reproduced. Technically, merchandising of your work is covered under licensing and work for hire.

Following a WFH agreement, the publisher is free to use your image/work on any merchandise they choose. Unless the contract stipulates compensation from a merchandise reproduction, be prepared to see your work adorning everything under the sun, but don't expect to get paid - even in items - for your popular image!

Under a licensing agreement, you would sell reproduction rights of your work to a merchandiser, following successful negotiations as to the nature of the merchandise and the payment you would receive. You may need to store this information away for the future, as the newcomer with the hot licensable property is practically unheard of.

Taxes

Wait, wait, don't close this magazine! I guarantee I will not bore you with dry tax details. The simple matter of taxes and the freelancer is not nearly as boring or difficult as everyone believes it is. First, lets look briefly at what type of taxes affect you.

Like everyone else in the world, you must pay *Federal Income Tax*. Your Internal Revenue Service (IRS) forms provide you with all the information you need to complete your tax return. Don't let the language of the forms scare you. It is really a very simple, straightforward process. Carefully read each step. There are many areas of the tax forms that will not apply to you. When you have completed your return, simply keep a copy on file that you can refer to the following year, and use it as a guide for which areas you must complete.

The other side of being a freelance writer or artist, is that you are now self-employed. This means that you must complete the portion of the IRS Tax Return Forms for those who are self-employed. Again, once you complete your first return, keep a copy on file to refer to, as a guide, the following year. **But, most importantly, you must pay *self-employment taxes and social security.***

Now, I emphasize this portion of the tax section, because it is the area where I have heard the most problem stories from new freelancers. Your self-employment tax and social security are going to equal about 20% of your paycheck. If you were an employee, the money would automatically be withheld (and matched) by your employer. However, as a freelancer, you must withhold those funds yourself. Now, don't think you can make it up at the end of the year. Wrong!! Many experienced professionals spend March and April scrambling to take on more and more projects, and sell even more originals, trying to scrape together the money to pay their taxes.

The IRS has set up a *Quarterly Estimates* payment system. This system requires you to make four estimated tax payments (based on the previous year's income) over the year. The benefit here, is that it alleviates your tax payment burden come April. It also eliminates the penalties the IRS charges you if you fail to make you Quarterly Estimates!

So, set aside 20% of each check, right off the bat. Establish a savings account, where you can save that money until your Quarterly Payment is due. Don't procrastinate and don't be waylaid by unexpected extravagances and indulgences. The 20% now is nothing compared to the substantial end-of-year bill, and IRS penalties. You'll spend years playing catchup, and it's only *you* who'll live to regret it - possibly from inside a prison for tax evasion. Start out your career with good business habits and you'll find that it makes doing business much easier and a lot less stressful!

ProFiles

Professional: Mark Nelson, Illustrator
Credits Include: *Aliens: Book One*, Dark Horse Comics; *Nightbreed #11 & #12*, Marvel Comics; interior illustrations, *Dragon Magazine*
Current Projects:*Feud*, Marvel Comics; *Blood and Shadows*, DC Comics
Question:How much value do you place on written contracts and the importance of creator-owned rights versus work-for-hire agreements? What business advice would you offer to newcomers?

I think that newcomers should really get a contract. Get it all spelled out so that later on in the game if someone says, "Well, no. We didn't say that," then you've got it on paper. So instead of going verbally or with a handshake and just trusting people, it's better to have it in writing. Then you both know where you stand. I think that a lot of times (in our industry), on regular, monthly books it tends to be a handshake. I think there is a lot of turnover. For example, I haven't received any contracts from Marvel for *Nightbreed*. That was a handshake, but that worked out. But on creator-owned projects, that's different. For example, on *Feud* we went through a big, long contract.

Sometimes it's kind of fun to do work-for-hire, because you are working on projects that you like. Like the *Aliens: Book One* was work-for-hire. There was no way I could do Aliens stuff without it being work-for-hire. But that worked out. On the other hand, *Feud* (of which Nelson is a co-creator) has been an absolute blast, because I get to create everything with Mike Baron. So that was a lot of fun.

It's also important for newcomers to be aware of filing Quarterly Estimate tax payments. That's what we (Nelson and his wife Anita, who is also an illustrator) are doing. We also have an accountant and we have a lawyer. Sometimes a lawyer is a good person to have go over your contracts with you, so you know what you're getting into. Sometimes there's a lot of legalese. It puts you in a better bartering position, so you can barter a little bit on creator-owned stuff, and hopefully work out a good deal between the two parties. The accountant tells us to keep track of everything, and then we do the bookkeeping. I think it's a good thing to have an accountant, because he can sit down and help you figure out a lot of the financial stuff.

Black and white artwork from Nelson's creator-owned project **Feud** from Marvel Comics' Epic line.

To Summarize

Like any business or profession, the comic industry is a complex intermesh of employers and employees. There are many rules and guidelines that stipulate how business can, and should, be done. Established ethical and professional guidelines do exist, and are available from a variety of source. It is in the best interest of the aspiring professional to familiarize themselves with the various aspects of doing business within this unique profession.

In this article we have looked at some of the more important aspects of the business and legal practices of the comic publishing industry. We have looked at conducting *negotiations* with a potential employer to determine the terms of an agreement that are mutually acceptable. We have also discussed the importance of a *contract*, and the two most important forms that affect us in this business - the *work for hire agreement* and the *creator-owned rights agreement*. I have also illustrated the usefulness and restrictions inherent in *standardized forms* such as *letters of intent, bills of sale, publication reproduction permissions*, and *billing invoices*. We've reviewed *copyright* rules, how this applies of *ownership of original works*, and how it affects *reproduction rights*. I've also given you some examples of *licensing* and *merchandising*, and how this can affect you as the creator. Finally, we took a brief, but important look at *taxes*, and your responsibilities as a self-employed professional.

Next month we'll look at what to do now that You've Got The Job. In this first part we'll discuss keeping your humility, pursuing more work, and fans.

Until next time, remember that as a professional you are responsible for the business and legal aspects of your work as well as it's creation. If you fail as a *business* professional, you will have only yourself to blame for your downfall as a *creative* professional. Use your mind and your common sense as a guide, set your passions and feelings aside when conducting business. If you can take an objective and businesslike stance, you are well on your way to proving your professionalism and closing important work deals. And *that* will make it a lot easier for Getting Into The Business Of Comics!

Glossary of Terms

bill of sale - form stipulating to the buyer of an original work just what rights, if any, they are purchasing with the work.

billing invoice - similar to a payment invoice, although generally provided by the creator to bill the employer.

contract - a written instrument which outlines the agreement between creator and employer. Can take a multitude of forms, including work-for-hire and creator-owned rights.

copyright - stipulates who holds ownership of a work for reproduction purposes.

copyright release - a form which should be provided to printers and copier shops to release the copyright of reproduced images back to the creator.

creator-owned rights contract - contract where the creator maintains most, or all, of the reproduction rights on the work they produce for an employer. Most common contract form with the smaller, independent creator-supportive companies.

letter of intent - outline of the elements of a contract agreement in letter form.

licensing - a formal agreement between the author of a work, and an individual or company which wishes to reproduce that particular work.

merchandising - reproduction of a work on materials other than publications. ie., prints, t-shirts, trading cards, buttons, pins, etc.

negotiation- discussion between a creator and employer as to the pertinent items to be covered by a contract.

ownership of original work - stipulates who holds ownership of the physical work

payment invoice/chit - form filled out and signed by the creator, billing employer for work done. Often provided by the employer, but also can be provided by the creator. Often can include fine print contracts.

permission to reproduce work in publication - a simplified contract form that focuses on the right to reproduce the work.

purchase order - a printed form from an employer requesting the completion of a particular work. Can sometimes act as a contract.

Quarterly Estimates - tax payment made four times in the year, based on income earned in the preceding year. Required by IRS from self-employed income earners. Also helps to defray the impact of the end of year tax payment.

reproduction rights - the rights, which can be bought and sold, to reproduce a work for publication , merchandising or licensing.

royalty - small percentage payment made on each book sold, based on numbers of books sold. Can be made in advance form, or in addition to a flat -fee payment. On comics the royalty is usually divided between the creators who work on a particular book.

standard forms - preprinted or typeset form which can be used as a type of contract. Can take the form of a letter of intent, bill of sale, permission for reproduction form or a billing invoice.

taxes - a crucial part of the business end of being a freelancer, self-employed taxes and social security taxes are required in addition to federal income tax. Freelancers are frequently required to make Quarterly Estimate payments to the IRS.

work-for-hire contract - contract where reproductions of the work produced becomes the sole property of the employer. Most common contract form with major comic publishers and on licensed characters (such as movie characters).

Reading List

To follow is a partial list of reference books, available to artists and writers, on the business and legal aspects of your career. Take the time to check out at least one or two of these publications. Many are available in your local library, or through your local bookstore. These are invaluable tools in conducting business with some authority. I have noted with an asterisk (*) the publications I have found most useful as a professional.

*Beverly Hills Bar Association Barristers Committee for the Arts. *The Visual Artist's Manual: A Practical Guide to Your Career.* New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.

* Crawford, Tad. *The Legal Guide for the Visual Artist: The Professional's Handbook.* New York: Madison Square Press, Inc.

Crawford, Tad. *The Writer's Legal Guide.* New York: Hawthorn/Dutton.

Davidson, Marion and Blue, Martha. *Making It Legal: A Law Primer for the Craftsmaker, Visual Artist and Writer.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

* Graphic Artists Guild. *Pricing and Ethical Guidelines.* New York: Graphic Artists Guild.

Klayman, Toby and Steinberg, Cobett. *The Artist's Survival Manual.* New York: Scribner's

If you have questions about topics covered in this column, please feel free to write. I will try to address your questions in the column or by a personal note. Send your letters to **Lurene Haines, c/o Arena Magazine, 264 main St., Florence, KY 41042.**

Brit Bits

News and gossip from Her Majesty's realm.

by Paul Birch

The Books of Larian's future hangs precariously in the air due to Jeff Anderson planning to spend much of the next two and a half years adapting The Bible for book publishers Lion. Joining him again will be letterer Steve Harrison who told me, "The way it's being put together is that Lion has got a theologian to tell Jeff what he must include in the narrative, and Jeff will then illustrate the story, an author called Simon Jenkins will dialogue it, then yours truly will letter it."

Anderson fans needn't worry that this means a hiatus from regular publications as he should still be contributing work for *Dark Angel* and *Judge Dredd*.

A man whose work's published far too rarely these days is Mike McMahon. Last seen on the *Alien Legion* special in the USA, he's now working with Keith Giffen and Alan Grant on *Tattered Banners* for DC's Vertigo imprint and contributing new covers for the *2000AD* group.

American readers may not appreciate the fact that McMahon is a living legend on these shores: his fine meshing of the European school of comic book illustration with Britain's penchant for satire-drenched action produced some revolutionary visual storytelling on the pages of *Judge Dredd*, *Slaine*, and *A.B.C. Warriors*.

A protracted illness resulted in him being away from the drawing boards for a few years until the Wagner/Grant-scripted *The Last American* series surfaced from Marvel Epic at the end of 1990, and from there he illustrated a few episodes of Mutomaniac in *Toxic!*.

Aside from action, McMahon looks for "texture and depth" in a story to stimulate him creatively. "I hate it when I get anything whimsical," he told me. "I throw it straight out! I like something I can get my teeth into."

And on a need for personal artistic progression, he commented, "I suppose I go through phases of reaching some sort of plateau in my own mind with what I'm doing. I think I'm getting somewhere, and I stick with that for a year or six months, and then I find it's beginning to change anyway -- not so much the technique but the way I feel about it in my head, then I feel I've got to move on a bit further. It's a natural evolution, really. It's conscious in that if I found that I was doing the same thing over and over again, I'd get a little bit fed up with myself."

Aside from *Mirrorman*, a Pinewood movies project for which he did design work alongside Kevin O'Neill, he's remained an artist of the comic book variety by choice. "There's just something about comics that appeals to me," he explained. "It's the reason I learned to read at 3 or 4 when I started getting *The Beezer*

(a weekly humor anthology cancelled in the '70s) -- I wanted to know what all the words meant because I liked the look of it.

"It's not something I'd ever really thought about. It's just what I am," he laughed. "I get up in the morning and I start drawing!"

Although it's not scheduled for US release until 1994, a new *Aliens* epic titled *Crusade* started serialization with #13 of Dark Horse International's *Aliens* anthology. Scripted by Michael Cook and illustrated by Christian Gorny, *Crusade* is set in London after the Earth War, as a team of mercenaries are sent in to find out why the city has remained free from Alien infestation. The answers are promised "to horrify you."

Dave Kendall is scheduled to illustrate the *Metallica* books for Malibu's Rock-It imprint from James Hudnall's scripts as soon as the group gives the all clear, but in the interim period he's taken over internal art duties for Malibu's adaptations of British author Brian Lumley's *Necroscope* novels. From #11, the *Whampyri* book's are translated into comic form.

A fan of the novels, Kendall said, "I actually asked Malibu if I could produce *Necroscope* so I was really pushing to do it." He also contacted the author, saying, "Brian really liked my work, and the paintings I produced to show him how I could handle his characters are now in his possession.

"*Necroscope*'s the main thing I'm going for now and I'm just really pleased to be working on it. I'm working pretty closely with Brian, and that's going really smoothly." And it's not only the relative closeness of the original creator that's helping; Kendall's physical proximity to the type of locations used in the series, the cultural nuances required, etc, all benefit the believability of the work, as he admits, "I do a lot of research and being English helps."

"The story entails Harry Keogh, still only a holographic image, attempting to prevent master vampire Thibor Ferenczy's adopted son, Yulian Bodescu wreaking havoc in England whilst traitors add unexpected problems to a newly established British/Soviet alliance."

"It's certainly adult material," he points out, not wanting to mislead potential new readers and further extrapolates. "There's a scene where the vampire corrupts the foetus, who is Yulian in his mother's womb, and I've had to handle it very, very carefully." However, he adds, "We actually seem to be getting a pretty good amount of acclaim with it! Brian wants me to stay on for the next couple of book adaptations, but we'll just have to see. The third book I do want to do, and he's already got me doing designs from plastic models of the series."

Well *Mindbenders* came out at last, even if they did decide to make some changes by the time they went to press, and editor Steve Donavon tells me they intend to maintain a quarterly schedule. *Judge Dredd Megazine* artist, Jon Beeston, will be drawing 'Jock Wars' in #2 and #3. Try and get hold of *Mindbenders*; it's not cheap, but it's a value for the money!

CHEWING OVER TODAY'S EARFORCE

by Tony Parsons

Greetings everyone in the known world! 'Tis I, the Gaming Fool, returned from my foray into the Abyss. You may be wondering what I, the Gaming Fool, was doing in such a hellish place as the foul-smelling reaches of the Abyss. Other than *Arena Magazine* decided to forego their "Gaming Section," well, I took it upon myself to visit the Arch-Devil Marduk, who has been causing problems at local convenient stores, and set this fiend to rights. I ventured gingerly down into the underworld filled with the dream of conquering this evil, a smile on my face and a banana in my pocket (just in case I was hungry, you gutterheads). I battled legions of demons and creatures to hideous to speak of (gives you goosebumps, don't it?). Finally, battered and exhausted, with all my splendor displayed before me as a shining banner of gold, I came upon Marduk. He sat upon his obsidian throne surrounded by lesser demons and those wacky succubi. I, the mighty and indisposable Gaming Fool, marched into his throne room when suddenly music of haunting melodies and driving force stopped me in my tracks. "What is this that pleases my ears so?" I inquired with all the force I could muster.

Marduk lurched forward. "My dear Gaming Fool, this is *Super Sonic Flight* from Earforce," the devil responded in mocking tones.

I found myself engrossed in the music and, to my dismay, I was soon playing and enjoying a debonair game of *Demons and Devils* (trademark and copyright 1993 Marduk Studios) with Marduk and I forgot all about my holy crusade. So, now you have presumably concluded that this is an article about the compact disc from Earforce entitled ***SUPER SONIC FLIGHT*** (how dramatic).

Super Sonic Flight, available in both cassette and CD format, is produced by the creative team of Joe Baker, Marv Goodman and the rest of the Baker Squadron, who are extremely talented folks, I must say. This disc contains 20 finely crafted tracks that provide wonderful background music for most role-playing, video, and reading situations. At first, I must admit that I, having such an immense ego, was skeptical at the quality of the music. To my surprise and pure delight the music was superb, expertly engineered and well-written. I actually felt inspired and moved at certain songs contained herein on the disc.

Intsrumental pieces like "Tracking the Demon" and "The Beast Within" inspired me to imagine myself hunting craven criminals or ferocious aliens in a futuristic setting. I ducked (quack!) down alleys as shots fired in the night and I closed in on my prey. In "Comes the Impaler" and "Midnight Onslaught," I found myself darting through a sewer-like maze, pursued by intergalactic terrors and high-tech psychos. Enshrouded, I anticipated their arrival. As the track "The Healing," which is broken into three different tracks, came on, I envisioned myself sitting beside a mortally wounded comrade, his life-blood flowing from his body and a look of deep sadness in his eyes.

These are just a few of the selections and the way that they affected me during role-playing sessions. As you listen to this disc, I do suggest picking this item up whenever possible, you'll discover these sensations for yourself, believe you me.

I feel that the music on this disc is geared for science-fiction games over fantasy-oriented games. That is my sole opinion and you, as a role-player, may feel differently. To this Fool the music seems more analogous to a high-tech, futuristic genre. I suspect that Today's Earforce will be producing another disc that will meet other gaming genre moods.

I vigorously suggest purchasing *Super Sonic Flight*, because it increases and enriches your role-playing sessions. The instrumental music is of superb quality and the disc is of high-grade as well. Music is an important part of life, so secure as much of it as you can, and I would number this disc among some of the best in generating imaginitive moods. Thank you for taking the time to read this article as it feels extremely good for me to be back with you, and thank Today's Earforce for their wonderful music.

May your dreams never be haunted by shadows.

For ordering information, write (or send $13.95 for a CD) to Today's Earforce, 1650 Broadway, Suite 701, New York, NY 10019.

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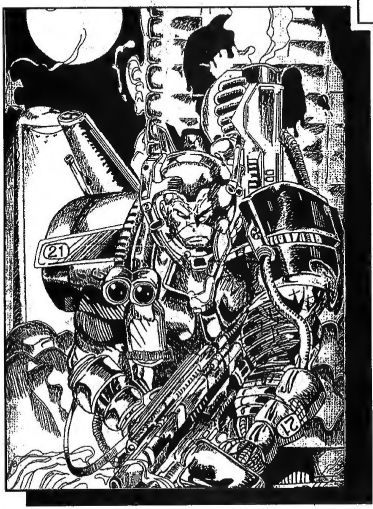

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